

# *Substitute Parents*

A STUDY OF FOSTER FAMILIES

BY MARY BUELL SAYLES

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## *Preface*

The behavior of parents toward their children is a topic which at one time or another interests every member of the human race; for if we have not all been parents we have at least all had them, and most of us have exercised our right of free speech on the child-rearing methods of our neighbors.

This interest in parental behavior has been attested in recent years by floods of literature on almost every possible phase of the topic. Two types perhaps predominate: books and articles of advice on how to rear normal children, and studies of children who have deviated in one way or another from the path of wholesome development. In the second group, much use has been made of the histories of so-called problem children who have come under the care of one type of agency or another, and the mistaken behavior of parents of these children has been described and discussed in the belief that it is largely responsible for the children's difficulties. With increasing frequency protests have been voiced against what is felt to be the overemphasis, in such studies, on parental failures, and the writer has felt the pressure of demand for a more constructive study—of parents who deal wisely and helpfully with the youngsters under their care.

So far as the writer knows, no such study of successful parents has yet been offered to the public, and the obstacles in the way of making one seem generally to be regarded as insuperable. Courts, social agencies, and child guidance clinics have furnished the material used in the studies of problem children, but the clients of such agencies, with their harassed lives, are not often a promising source from which to draw constructive suggestions. On the other hand, happy homes seldom open their doors to the social investigator.

There are, however, groups of homes, already well known to certain social workers, whose possible contribution to a study of helpful parental behavior has been generally overlooked. Foster homes drawn into the service of children by child welfare agencies of high standards are often presided over by women and men who prove themselves remarkable mother and father substitutes.

A peculiar interest attaches to parent-child relationships of a foster character in that they represent always that "fresh start" which frustrated parents try so often to achieve with their own children. Each placement, in agencies of the best modern type, is made with the intensely practical aim of happy adjustment for the particular child or children, and so is preceded by careful study of both home and child. Yet in each placement, since only certain facets of the whole truth can ever be known, there is the absorbing interest of experiment—not, indeed, scientifically controlled, and yet possibly to yield, and often yielding, new knowledge helpful in future placements.

Might a tapping of this source give us glimpses of parent-child relationships sufficiently constructive to in some degree balance the destructive ones about which so much has been written? With the hope that such might prove to be the case, a study of child placing records was undertaken which has led to the preparation of the present volume. The narratives are of course disguised, but without alteration of essentials. The book is intended for any reader who is interested in children primarily from the parent's point of view, or anyone who cares to learn what relationships developed in foster homes may mean to foster parents as well as to children.

## PART I

# *Foster Children*

## HOW DO THEY DIFFER FROM OTHER CHILDREN?

So long as we think of the human being as an individual entity, a self-contained unit, there is no clear-cut line of demarcation between the foster child and his fellows in the community. In any schoolroom, on any playground, foster children are indistinguishable from their mates: they may be leaders or followers, constructive or destructive elements in the group, well adjusted or ill adjusted to their several environments; they may be of any level of intelligence from the highest to the lowest, with any assortment of particular abilities and disabilities, tastes, ambitions, and idiosyncrasies.

This is self-evident, you will say. And such being the case, what can there be to say about foster children that is not applicable to children in general?

But of course each human unit born into the world is not merely that—not merely a bundle of potentialities destined to expand into the future man or woman. From the moment of birth to the end of his days he is always, to himself, the center of a network of human relationships. And for the foster child, this network is essentially different from that of the child in his own home.

"Not, surely," the reader may exclaim, "for the baby taken before conscious memory begins, who is brought up by devoted foster parents believed by him to be his own!"

Theoretically, it would seem that we have here an exception. But how often does such a condition of unquestioning belief hold to adulthood, or even through early childhood? So rarely does it hold, so rudely and cruelly is the fact of



alien origin brought home to many children thus kept in ignorance, that experienced child-placing agencies are more and more insisting that all babies placed by them shall be informed of the true state of affairs while still very young, when experience has shown that the information may be absorbed without shock. The foster parent who disregards this wise rule does so at his peril—still more, to the peril of the small son or daughter whom he seeks to protect by a dangerous subterfuge. If by such suppression of truth the child's first few years are rendered easier, a period of far graver difficulty is likely to ensue which simple, commonsense facing of facts might have forestalled.

"But," the reader may persist, "the child who never knew his own parents, who can recall no period when he was not cared for by his foster parents—surely it is fantastic to suppose that his world need be complicated by relationships to utterly unknown progenitors, whenever or however he may become aware of their existence?"

Fantastic—perhaps; but not therefore untrue. Have you forgotten, or perhaps never realized, how large a part fantasy plays among the realities of early years? Not merely in the play life, which for many children is a continuous series of make-believes; but in all the identifications with loved elders whose strength or beauty or wisdom or possessions the child imagines himself rivaling in future years. On these identifications, as well as on the manifestations of love that encourage him to make them, the child largely depends for his sense of stability in the present and his faith in the realizability of a future seen as yet only in dream. If, as he grows out of babyhood, he is permitted to believe that he is connected with his foster parents by the usual blood tie, and to make the usual assumption that both their love for him and

his identification with them depend upon this tie, the shock of learning that it does not exist is likely to upset his universe. If, on the other hand, he is early told that he entered the family circle through the deliberate choice of his parents instead of by the commoner birth process, and is led to believe that love of the deepest and truest may go to a being thus freely chosen, that the happiest identification may be reached through a common outlook on life and a common striving for goals, he need experience no such threat to his security.<sup>1</sup>

It is not, however, so much with foster children who have lived all their conscious lives under the wing of one pair of devoted substitute parents that this study will be concerned, as with the many less fortunate youngsters who have been passed from hand to hand and thus have never had a chance to be unaware that they are separated from their own parents. Whether or not such a child has ever known these important personages in the flesh, we may be sure that they have played or at some time will play a role in his life—a role whose nature and importance are determined by a thousand variable factors in his personal make up and outward circumstances. So long as life brings him all the satisfactions that any child needs, he may be able to live in the present and future, but let him encounter serious obstacles to his happiness, especially in a consciousness that he is not satisfactory to his foster parents, and the trail back to his own parents is thrown open to his imagination. Other things being equal, the longer a child has been separated from his own parents and the more varied and unsatisfying have been the circumstances of his life, the more we should be prepared to find that his parent-images

<sup>1</sup> A reader comments that "telling children doesn't work so clock-like as it sounds." In a later section this fact is simplified in a fuller discussion of security.

have grown in importance to him and have become confused and distorted. Yet it is probable that the nature of the child—the range of his imagination, his tendency to live in his own thoughts or on the other hand to seek constantly outside himself for all his satisfactions—will have had quite as much to do with the development of his parent images as any outward circumstances.

# Foster Parents

## HOW DO THEY DIFFER FROM OWN PARENTS?

As persons, it can hardly be supposed that they differ at all, unless possibly, on the average, they may have a little more enthusiasm for children, since they have gone out of their way to secure the presence of youngsters in their homes instead of merely accepting those who came to them. In their relationships to their children, however, they do differ in certain ways, some almost too obvious to mention, others upon which it may be worth while to dwell for a moment. Clearly there can be

- 1 No physical bond between foster parent and child and (usually) no bond formed by nursing and care from the earliest days,
- 2 No heredity common to the two generations,
- 3 No responsibility for bringing the child into the world,
- 4 No prenatal rejection

Concerning the first of these points one can only assume, with the rest of the world, that the bond between foster parent and child is never of quite the same quality as that in the natural family. It may appear to be just as strong, and to give just as much happiness to the persons involved. Indeed, when one considers the infinitely varied forms assumed by the natural parent-child relationship, ranging through all the phases of tenderness and of antagonism, it may be hazarded that many foster relationships are more congenial and happy than many natural ones. But this does not necessarily shake the age-old assumption that the two relationships are always *different*, and that the natural one is on the average, though

with numerous exceptions, less readily dissolved under pressure of external difficulties

Concerning the other three points of major difference, there is something definite to be said

Probably what most often deters people from adopting children is the fear that objectionable hereditary traits will crop up in the youngsters as they grow older. A classic case in which such fears came to the surface later on is that of Michael, who had been adopted in babyhood by a childless couple, cultivated people with a comfortable home. The foster parents had been fully informed about the child's parents, an irresponsible pair who had repeatedly deserted their young family and one at least of whom had a reputation for dishonesty, and it is recorded that the foster mother, while expressing a belief in heredity, had said she felt that with normal interests and good training its influence could be overcome. However, ten years later she brought Michael back to the agency for study, giving a history of stealing and of long struggle on her part to overcome this tendency, and expressing extreme fear that he had inherited a propensity to steal. As she told the story of his first childish purloinings, they sounded no more serious than similar behavior on the part of many small children of highly respectable parentage. It seemed evident that her attitude toward them from the first had been colored by her fear of hereditary influences, and that the extreme tenseness she showed had probably served to prolong the very habit she battled against.

In calling Michael's case a classic or typical one, the writer does not mean to imply that a large proportion of adopted children arouse such tensions and anxieties in their foster parents. She has no way of estimating what this proportion

may be. What she would like to do is to point out that such attitudes are not peculiar to foster parents.

Most readers are probably familiar with the satisfactions felt in normal family life by parents who identify, or think they identify, in their child, traits which they pride themselves upon as characteristic of themselves or their respective forebears. Possibly fewer have considered the effect upon parents of identifying, or thinking that they have identified, traits in their child which are associated in their minds with some black-sheep member of their tribe—or with some black-sheep phase of their own. In child guidance clinic records one meets often with dissatisfaction from such causes—dissatisfaction especially trouble-breeding when the “other side of the family” is blamed for the faults of the young, and a source of peculiar anguish when either parent harbors a guilty fear lest some of his own wrong-doings may be influencing the development of his offspring.

From any tendency to such identifications, satisfaction-giving or the reverse, foster parents are of course exempt. If the joys they lose by this exemption are obvious, no less obvious, to one who is familiar with the darker side of the picture, are the miseries they escape and the occasions of bitterness they are spared. If a foster child turns out badly they may lay the blame on his inheritance or early experiences or (possibly!) on their own mismanagement of him, but at least need never hark back to some ancestral or more recent blot on either of their family 'scutcheons to explain him. If he develops finely, they will feel free to show their satisfaction as they might not if they could be accused of claiming credit for it.

Closely allied to the sense of guilt due to the feeling that one has passed on an unfavorable heredity, is the sense of re-

sponsibility for having brought the child into the world at all. No special faults or weaknesses in a child need be evident or suspected to call this feeling into existence; it is part of the normal parental pattern, but may be accentuated to the point of pathology by any sort of misfortune to the child or the family as a whole. Inadequacy in the parent, or even wholly undeserved misfortune like unemployment in a world crisis, may so increase the tension due to this feeling of responsibility as to destroy all happiness in the parent-child relationship. From any such feeling foster parents should be exempt, though it may be that something corresponding to it comes into being, under stress, in families where adoption has been carried through. On the other hand, in families which have become attached to a foster child not formally adopted, economic misfortune sometimes brings a state of fear lest the child be removed which is devastating to all concerned, and a difficult problem for the placing agency may result.

The fourth point of difference between natural and foster homes, namely absence, in the latter, of prenatal rejection, may need a bit more interpretation; for while the feeling of responsibility for own children and fears regarding heredity are constantly and openly expressed in everyday life and literature, the abortions forced upon wives by men who object to becoming fathers and the intense aversion to bearing children felt by many women are, comparatively speaking, seldom mentioned. Whether economic or other causes more often account for such attitudes in men we cannot say. Reasons for the woman's aversion are diverse, ranging from the fears associated with pre-marital and extra-marital conceptions to the anguish, physical and mental, which an additional pregnancy means to women worn out by childbearing. Such situations are common, as agencies for the care of unmarried

mothers and birth control agitations testify. Even less frequently mentioned is the repugnance to motherhood felt by many wives who shrink from the physical suffering and loss of beauty involved in childbearing, who are too immature or too narcissistic to endure the prospect of a rival in the home, or who object to the new cares a baby will force them to assume and to its interference with plans for work or play. What proportion such wives bear to the general population there is no means of knowing. Often their feelings of rejection vanish with the birth of the baby, as mothers in first pregnancies are assured will be the case;<sup>1</sup> but when they disappear from public view or even from consciousness, they have not necessarily ceased to operate under cover, as many records in child guidance clinics bear witness. Mothers who bring their children to these clinics for current problems often reveal a history of intense rejection during the prenatal period. Sometimes a harsh, repressive attitude on the mother's part, one of the chief sources of trouble, is traced to such a history; again, extreme overprotection which hampers the child's growth is shown to be the expression of a sense of guilt and a desire to compensate for wrong done the child by early rejection.

Many a foster child has been an unwanted child, the vic-

<sup>1</sup> "It is all very well for the upholders of birth control to say that every child has a right to be wanted, but I should like to know what proportion of even the best-loved children were wanted in the sense of being deliberately planned for; what proportion were neither wanted nor unwanted, coming so to speak, of their own volition; and finally, what proportion came contrary to wishes, hopes and expectations. I venture to assert that the last group would equal either of the other two, if not both of them together. And even those children who are definitely not wanted win their way into the group of the most dearly loved. For my own part, I am free to confess that not one of my [four] children was 'wanted.' Not one of them was justified from the economic point of view . . . and yet there is not one of them that has not immeasurably enriched and deepened my life, and for whom I am not profoundly grateful." M. Beatrice Blankenship, "The Enduring Miracle," *The Atlantic Monthly*, 152, October, 1933, pp. 413-414.



tim of such a rejecting attitude on the part of the woman who bore him, and perhaps on the part of his father as well. Sometimes these attitudes can be changed or softened. When they prove unalterable, the one best chance for the child, most people will agree, is to be received early into the home of true foster parents, who can meet his needs as his biological parents never have—of a substitute mother who, whether she has lost a child, or longed for one in vain, or already has one or more of her own, possesses a store of essential motherliness more than sufficient for demands upon it. That there are many such women in all walks of life no one can doubt who has had much to do with child-placing agencies which utilize either free or boarding homes. But to assume that people who apply for a child to adopt or to board, however much they may talk of loving children, are such large hearted persons would be as naive as to assume that people who bring children into the world are invariably equipped with parental love.

For foster parents, as well as own parents, may reject a child—not, indeed, before his birth, but before the act by which they make him theirs, and such rejection may prove as upsetting to him as any by an own parent.

An easily understood case is that of parents who have lost a much loved child. The father or mother or both may, in their desperate grieving, reach a point where they conceive the idea of taking another child to distract their minds from their loss and furnish them with a substitute object of devotion. When they are mature persons, capable of deep feeling and deep thinking, who have correctly gauged their own capacities, such a plan may work out beautifully for all concerned. Sometimes, however, it is a mere expression of desperation on the part of immature, impulsive people who

would be wiser to await the gradual subsidence of grief and (perhaps) the coming of another child. Sometimes the enthusiasm of such a couple drops as soon as an eligible child is brought to their attention; sometimes it persists till the little substitute is actually installed in their home, and only after some time do they admit to themselves that they cannot transfer their interest as they had hoped—perhaps, even, that seeing another child asleep in their own child's bed, playing with his toys, only intensifies their grief, until they feel they must be rid of his alien presence before their own hurt turns to a bitterness which will hurt him. Sometimes such feelings of revulsion, less intense, are repressed from a sense of duty, and the child grows up in a home that is never quite his.

More obscure and dangerous may be the situation which arises when one marital partner is reluctant to take a child but yields to the wishes of the other and more or less deliberately conceals his or her own state of mind. When the man is the reluctant one we may, indeed, have an essentially normal situation, since many men are cool to the abstract idea of a child in the home, but when one actually makes its appearance begin to discover in themselves capacities for feeling they had not suspected. Of course this happens with women, too, but only as an exception to the usual rule: women capable of loving children usually are fully aware of their feelings. Since it is the woman who normally assumes most of the daily care of a young child, and since a wife enthusiastic enough to have won her husband over will almost certainly do so, the reluctant husband is likely to get a great deal of pleasure out of his new functions with little arduous toil. A woman who yields to her husband's wishes and reluctantly takes a child, on the other hand, will in most cases feel herself swamped by duties which he cannot possibly assume, and which she is al-

most certain to find distasteful. If she is sufficiently well to do she may be able to leave the whole job to a nurse, which means that the child, however well cared for in babyhood, will grow up motherless. If she forces herself to go through the motions of daily care without finding in it any of the normal satisfactions, a real mother-child relationship cannot possibly result, and her dissatisfactions may be aggravated by jealousy as she watches a father-child relationship develop which shuts her out. Sometimes such a situation terminates with the abrupt return of a much bewildered youngster to the supplying agency; sometimes it drags on for years, and the foster child, grown to adulthood, tells how good her father always was to her but how she never felt herself wanted by her mother or learned to love her.

We do not mean to imply that husbands so self-centered as to be incapable of developing fatherly affection do not sometimes upset placement arrangements because they cannot tolerate diversion of their wives' attention from themselves or interference with their own cherished leisure-time activities; such grown-up spoiled children are not peculiar to either sex. Perhaps men of this type more often refuse consent to adoption outright, and so are less likely to get themselves into a situation from which they seek to escape, than are women; perhaps the custom of holding the wife responsible when a marriage proves infertile, or the fact that the husband usually holds the purse-strings, puts her under special compulsion to yield to her husband's wishes when he wants to take a child; perhaps it is mere chance that has led to the writer's being so impressed with the superlative danger of placing a child in a home where the woman is reluctant. Certainly it is important for a placing agency to know both prospective foster parents and make sure that neither one is re-

pressing or concealing a deeply felt antipathy to the project of taking a child.

It is of course quite possible that in yielding to her husband's wishes in this matter a wife is not merely (or even chiefly) trying to please him but is achieving some end of her own—for example, release from a disagreeable outside job. She may not like children or at all wish to undertake the care of one, but at least doing so will mean escape from the office grind! One woman whose coldness toward her small foster son had puzzled visitors admitted, years later, that she had taken him largely to have an excuse for getting out of social obligations which certain ambitions of her husband's rather forced upon her. A worse reason for assuming the duties of child rearing can hardly be imagined, and one is not surprised to learn that this placement ended in failure and return of the child to the agency.

Along with such cases where a foster mother (or father) feels something comparable to the rejection felt by reluctant own parents for a coming child, are others where the desire for a child in the home, while real enough, arises out of feelings or motives or drives which offer little promise of happiness for any youngster placed there.

# Motives

## WHAT, IN GENERAL, LEADS PEOPLE TO SEEK THE EXPERIENCE OF FOSTER PARENTHOOD?

We may dispose in few words of the grosser and more obvious motives indicating unfitness. A generation ago there were undoubtedly many women who went in for baby farming for profit, as there were many persons of both sexes who took older boys and girls free and made slaves of them. We can not flatter ourselves that either of these types of enterprise has been wholly stamped out, indeed in certain localities they undoubtedly still flourish, but well-conducted agencies today have established standards and methods of supervision which make such practices in foster homes used by them impossible. With exploiters thus excluded from their ranks, boarding foster mothers have been encouraged to feel themselves honorable members of a semi professional group cooperating with children's agencies, with the result that increasing numbers of well equipped women have been drawn into this service.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, standards in many agencies using free homes have been raised. It is not, however, with a description of the standards and methods of either type of agency that we are here concerned, but with some of the less readily identified motives which sometimes influence persons who seek to become foster parents—motives of which those interested in a *mental hygiene approach to human problems* are perhaps a

<sup>1</sup> Like teachers and nurses these women receive compensation for their services; and though this compensation (in the form of board) is far less adequate than that of the other groups the fact that the services are congenial to them and are performed in a home to which they are bound by other ties makes the arrangement acceptable.

little more keenly aware, to signs of which they are possibly more alert, than are some others.

It may be well to explain at once that in speaking of unacknowledged and perhaps unrealized motives we do not mean to brand these motives as base. An advantage of education in mental hygiene is, indeed, that it tends to free one from the impulse to classify motives as base or noble, selfish or unselfish, and accustoms one to recognize, behind any given action or habitual attitude, a mingling of many different motives and a fairly constant drive for satisfaction of one sort or another. Thus the individual with a mental hygiene point of view finds nothing shocking in the realization that many persons who offer free care to children, and some who take them to board, are in search primarily of self-fulfilment in an object of devotion, or of a response that they have failed to obtain elsewhere, or of an opportunity to shape to their own design some young, malleable personality. Such persons sometimes believe that they are actuated by the purest, the most unmixed, of motives—the desire to make some child happy; and it may be no easy task to discover, in advance of placement, the more self-regarding aspects of their feelings. There can be no doubt, however, that like own parents, they are sometimes seeking compensation in children for frustrated affections and disappointed ambitions, or are endeavoring to find through them release from feelings of guilt which may long have been warping their own personalities. It is not the selfishness or baseness of these more or less hidden aims that concern those engaged in finding homes for children, but rather the danger to the children of being used for ends not their own. A parent or a foster parent, on the other hand, may seek and find satisfaction in helping a child

to discover his own gifts and essential desires and in getting him started on the road to self-fulfilment, and one may recognize in such an individual the wise friend of children without imputing to him any particular unselfishness. Needless to say it is the latter type of individual, one who is happily free from the compelling necessity of shaping others to his needs, who is sought as a foster parent by the agency whose workers are fully alive to mental hygiene implications. This does not mean that such an individual is above receiving satisfaction from the response of a child to interest and affection shown him—how could a normal human being be so?—but merely that the desire for response would never be permitted to obscure the goal of independence and self-guidance for the child.

A motive which perhaps always forms part of the complex actuating any normal childless person to take a foster child might be termed the motive of functional predestination. However diverse a man's ancestors may have been on every other point, nearly all of them have functioned—though some rather sketchily—as parents to at least one child; so that it is not surprising that most of us, as we grow to maturity, develop a rather strong parental bent. As a person with a strong artistic or other constructive bent is restless and dissatisfied unless he can find some way of following it, so many of us are uneasily aware of gifts for dealing with the needs of young and helpless members of our species, which there seems no satisfactory way of utilizing outside a parental relationship. These powers, these abilities, are there to be used, we feel; and if no children come to us in the natural way, we are likely, as the years pass, to begin to think of seeking substitutes for the young laggards. And assuredly we are wise in doing so; for the more fully we can use our dominant

powers and abilities, the happier and more harmonious will be our lives. The childless individual who exploits himself or herself solely as wage-earner and recreation seeker, as housewife or social butterfly, may of course conceivably have nothing else worth exploiting, but is more than likely to have, perhaps shut away in some dark cupboard of the mind, a normal craving for offspring, a desire to experience that peculiar absorption in the growth processes of an immature human being which only parents experience at its fullest.

But surely (someone may say) this is a self regarding desire!

Surely it is, and one that no man or woman need hesitate to avow. For the individual who took a foster child without hope of finding satisfaction in the experience would be too selfless to be quite human, and while we may be able to conceive partially and dimly of some higher type of being than the human, there is no other with which we have had actual experience. The thing about this intensely human interest in the growth stages of small boys and girls which proves it wholesome and desirable is that it is a condition peculiarly favorable to the fostering of such growth.

So far so good. But evidently there are fine discriminations involved here which have not been made.

Let us be concrete, for a change. Here is a wife in her thirties, come to make application for a young child to adopt or to board. She adores babies, has had none or has lost a little son or daughter. She feels that her home is incomplete, her husband shares this feeling. They enjoy the babies of friends and relatives, but playing with these youngsters from time to time only makes them wish more ardently to have one at home to devote themselves to.

This is a normal beginning for such a conversation. But as



the talk flows on there is another note that the experienced interviewer will be listening for Will this would-be foster mother take *delight* in each reaching-out toward independence of her nursling—in his desire to wield his own spoon, however clumsily, in his demand to be allowed to put on his own socks and shoes, to make friends in his own way with the neighbor's small boy or dog, to go to school alone, to fight his own battles? Or will she be one of those mothers who enjoy the brooding process so much that they keep their young under their wings as long as possible, or one of those flawless housekeepers who must have everything exquisitely neat, even if this involves putting off indefinitely the child's experiments with utensils and playfellows?

Again, here is an older couple, in their fifties or nearing them They, too, feel something lacking in their home, they want young life about them, would be willing to take a small girl or boy, or even one not so small They are beginning to look ahead, to realize what a devoted daughter in the home, or a fine young man in the family business, would mean to them in their sixties and seventies They feel they have a great deal to give in the way of both affection and the opportunities money can buy

Perhaps they have, but to whom? To the child who conforms, adopts their plans for himself or herself—or, equally, to one who early reaches out after a life of his own, seeking the satisfaction of tastes and interests perhaps wholly different from theirs—above all, it may be, the satisfaction of young love—instead of being content to postpone all these satisfactions to a season more convenient to kind guardians?

Even before the present psychological era set us all to challenging our own motives and those of our neighbors, it is safe to say that experienced social workers never accepted

without question the statements as to motive made by applicants for foster children; nowadays, few of us would be so naïve as to do so. With the rapid permeation through large sections of society of some rudimentary notions regarding "motivations" and "mechanisms" of human behavior, we should be prepared to believe that many different forces combine to influence each of us who seeks to become a foster parent, and that the values for a child in any free or boarding home depend on qualities of heart and head in those who will care for him—their understanding of child nature and of this particular child, their interest in him and in finding ways to help him, their willingness to forego anticipated satisfactions and make all plans for him contingent on his slowly emerging nature and needs.

# *Self-Knowledge*

## WHAT DO WOULD-BE FOSTER PARENTS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THEMSELVES?

Some of the things they need to know are implied in the preceding pages about motives. Are they prepared to do what the wisest own parents have always done: enjoy each passing phase of babyhood, childhood, and youth to the full, help the youngster to enjoy or leave him free to enjoy, as he goes, all the normal satisfactions of his age, but never hold him back, or encourage him to linger, or try to force him into a mold, however much they grieve to lose their personal hold on him or would like him to follow plans in harmony with their own tasks or interests? It may be hard for foster parents of a young child to anticipate all that it will mean to release him progressively as he gains strength to seek independence, but if they are prepared to take the first steps, and if they fully grasp the principle involved, they should grow in capacity to perform their part as the child acquires power to perform his.

If men and women who plan to assume full parental status toward a child need to accept in advance the principle of gradually releasing him to live his own life, those who apply for the privilege of caring for a child temporarily or for an indefinite period, under the supervision of an agency, need to be prepared for a more abrupt and complete severance of relations. If his own parents or other relatives make a home for him, if an adopting home opens its doors to him, the foster parents with whom he is boarding will have to give him up, perhaps on short notice. This, at least, is true in certain types of agencies and for children who either have relatives or are

adoptable. Children without family ties who (for reasons valid or invalid) are not considered good risks for adoption are more likely to stay till adulthood with one family; but no foster mother who accepts board for a child can be sure in advance of keeping him so long.

As an unavoidable condition of this type of care, the uncertainties involved are fully understood by all adults who undertake it. If these adults have children of their own they may be able to face the prospect of loss even of a dearly loved foster child with equanimity; if they are childless, the strain will be greater. Counting the cost in advance is hardly possible, for no one can foresee to what extent, in the course of a few months or years, her life will become intertwined with that of a child for whom she undertakes to function as a mother. Those who have loved most and suffered most intensely at parting may vow never to subject themselves again to such a strain; yet often they will find in seeking to meet the needs of another youngster the solace they have sought in vain in other occupations. Meeting the needs of child after child in this fashion, for those who have courage to face the pains for themselves involved, may be as enriching an experience as can fall to the lot of a woman.

Persons on the brink of applying for a child, whether to adopt or to board, will, however, naturally be thinking less about how hard it will be to give him up one day than about how much they want him now. This is the great question for them; how much *do* they really want him? How are they to tell?

Some women do actually approach without discoverable doubts or fears the experience of taking another woman's child to mother. The writer is sure of this because she has known one or two of them. Abounding health, ample means,

and an excellent equipment for child care (that of a trained nurse) largely account for this care free outlook in the case we have chiefly in mind. Lack of one or more of these valuable ingredients of confidence may well give rise to hesitation, especially where adoption is in question. Foster mothers who are honest will often confess to an agony of doubt, before the step was taken—doubt which may have cleared as swiftly as a sea mist rises to reveal a brilliant blue day when once the child was in their home, or which may have lingered to plague them for months or years. One foster mother enumerates the bad nights, headaches, anxieties, the interference with work and with freedom to come and go, the pangs when her husband came home with woolly rabbits instead of the anniversary gifts of other years—but ends by asserting triumphantly that her little daughter has been worth all this and more. Yet how is the would be foster mother to know in advance?

The answer probably is that she can't know—absolutely. Certain questions that she may put to herself may however help her to decide. Has she cared for any child continuously, day and night, for any length of time, or taught children regularly, day in and day out—and felt her interest and enjoyment of the youngsters' companionship deepen as the experience went on? Has she borrowed young relatives and friends as opportunity offered? Does she entertain fixed notions of how she wants her child to look and behave and "do" in school, do her imaginings of a future with the youngster revolve chiefly about pretty clothes and petting and pride in appearance or success, or is she more interested in the development of young minds and prepared to enjoy with keen relish the unexpected outcroppings of tastes and interests and points of view utterly unlike her own? Does she plan to give

a large share of her time to the child, or does she expect to turn him over to a nurse? Does she feel she knows all she needs to know about rearing a child, or is she open-minded and eager to learn more? Is she ordinarily patient and persistent in seeing through anything she undertakes, or is she subject to enthusiasms that flare up and die down, leaving her bored and eager for a change?

These questions are meant, of course, to suggest that some practical experience with children as well as an emotional interest in them is to be desired; that a woman who is interested in children as growing minds and personalities will do a better job than one who feels toward them much as she does toward dolls or kittens or puppies; and that one who feels she may have something to learn is more promising material than one who is certain she knows all there is to be known about rearing children. This last point, however, may be overemphasized, for experience does tend to give confidence, and confidence is a great asset in dealing with children. As to the question regarding the extent to which the foster mother plans to care for the child herself, it is not the writer's intention to suggest that no part of the care of a child should be given over to a nurse. It is certain, however, that foster children who have been passed from hand to hand need, even more if possible than own children, a great deal of their mother's care and companionship—and will need it more rather than less as they grow out of fascinating babyhood and through the long series of transformations that leads toward adulthood.

Experience with children is of course less essential to the foster father, though a great asset if he possesses it. It is tremendously important that he too should take an affectionate interest in a foster child, should be willing to give freely of

his time to making friends, and should not object to being interrupted in his pursuits by the newcomer. He may be embarrassed by the fact, but it is none the less a fact, that he must be prepared to find he is serving as a model of what a man should be to his young foster son, as an interpreter and standard-setter for all the male half of humanity, to his foster daughter. But when he reflects that most of his friends are already sustaining similar responsibilities toward progeny of their own, he will not be too much overwhelmed.

An important feature of placement in any sort of foster home by a responsible modern agency is its tentative character. Each placement, however carefully planned, is still essentially an experiment, and this fact more than any other should relieve the fear felt by some people as they approach the brink of foster parenthood.

How such an arrangement works out, in simplest fashion, is illustrated in a family known to the writer. The plan had been to adopt four children; two boys and a girl, taken in early infancy, had proved satisfactory to all concerned, and were already well established when the foster mother brought home a second baby girl not quite a month old. Like the others, this small person was given the tenderest care and grew plump and rosy; but after some weeks, word came from the agency which was caring for the child's mother, saying that she had been given a psychometric test and appeared to be far below average in intelligence. The three older children were normal offspring of normal parents; it seemed hardly fair to them, or wise, to introduce into the family circle a little sister who would be likely to prove deficient. So the baby was returned, in far better condition than when she had been taken on trial. Had her mother been tested before this first placement, the foster mother would have been spared a

painful decision. Now she was forced to find what comfort she could in the thought that nowhere could the baby have been given a better start.

Failure to respond to one child on the part of husband or wife or both is naturally no sign that they may not prove ardently devoted to another. One couple known to the writer took a boy of six into their home who promptly captured the hearts of all their relatives and friends. He was attractive-looking, sweet-mannered, responsive, intelligent and already inclined to be studious, had a delightfully musical make-up and a sweet little voice. He was perfectly docile and showed much appreciation of his new home and a desire to please his new parents. Yet at the end of a few weeks' trial they felt they must give him up. Exceedingly tender-hearted, they suffered acutely at the thought of uprooting the child again, but they were sure he was not the son for them. They wanted a "regular fellow"—would prefer a boy with positive, glaring faults and what they felt to be a stronger nature to one so sweetly acquiescent. Though they refrained at the time from applying the opprobrious term "sissy" to their small charge, they later admitted that he had seemed to them to be one. The six-year-old whom they later took—and kept—appeared a far more faulty youngster, but they have never regretted making the change.

It is fortunate indeed when husband and wife agree in this way, for when their tastes in children differ there is likely to be trouble—either conflict at the start, or a yielding by one which will bring difficulty for all concerned later on. An agreement by which two children were taken, each parent having the deciding voice regarding one, might prove a solution, provided it was in the nature of an easy-going compromise with plenty of good will on both sides. One couple



announced to the representative of the agency to which they applied that the wife wanted a girl and the husband wanted a boy, so they would be satisfied with either. They agreed that they "would absolutely not be able to manage a quiet, shy, sulky child and would be infinitely better equipped to deal with a child whose problems would be more nearly their own." The range of these "own" problems had (by their account of their own doings in childhood) been fairly wide, including intense jealousy of a younger brother, much deliberate truancy, sex experimentation, "getting money" for purposes of which father disapproved, signing school report cards and absent excuses, and so arranging a high school course of study as to frustrate the family's insistence on a college education. This pair of grown-up problem children were devoted to one another and of good standing in the community, and they did an excellent job by two foster children. Such self-knowledge and frankness as they displayed are a great help to agency workers<sup>1</sup> in deciding which child of several available is likely to fit into a particular home, and may prevent many heartaches for children and foster parents alike.

<sup>1</sup> But a help (one reader comments) only to such workers as understand that it is what one has made of experience—not the raw material of experiences in themselves—that determines fitness for foster parenthood—or any other job.

## *Information Needed*

WHAT DO WOULD-BE FOSTER PARENTS NEED  
TO KNOW ABOUT ANY CHILD THEY ARE  
CONSIDERING TAKING INTO THEIR HOME?

Men and women who wish to take a child into their home not infrequently start out by asking (let us say) for a fair-haired baby with a thoroughly sound family background which gives reason to believe that he can go through college successfully, and end by accepting a dark-haired youngster of six or seven whose parents are either altogether unknown or known to be far from desirable citizens. This change of front is due not solely to difficulty in finding the type of child desired, though often such difficulty sets the stage for a new act in the drama of adoption; it arises in part out of the experience of meeting some actual boy or girl who, in spite of every recorded disadvantage in the way of family background, stirs the liking and sympathy of the prospective foster parents and shifts their center of interest from what they want to what a particular child needs. .

Probably most candidates for permanent foster parenthood would ask first whether the child suggested for their consideration is sound in body and mind. Many would add: whether he is capable of taking as much education as they and their brothers or sisters took—or the sort of education that they wanted but were prevented from getting. Many, too, will wish to know all about his ancestry and, if there are distinctly unfavorable strains in it, what the probabilities are that these will crop out in the child; also, if he has a father and mother living, not only what they are in themselves, but what have

been their attitudes toward the child and toward giving him up? If the child is old enough to have developed definite behavior patterns, the prospective foster parents will wish to know whether any of these present serious problems and, in general, what sort of child he is affectionate? sensitive? independent? aggressive?—and so on

Candidates for foster parenthood that will be less than permanent may be expected to take a milder interest in most of these questions and their right to have answers to some of them may be doubted. The first and last, however, may concern them almost equally with adopting parents. A child who needs special nursing and upbuilding, or special treatment for physical or mental or behavior difficulties, will appeal to certain adults in both groups, though they will probably be in a minority in each.

All reputable child-placing agencies nowadays keep records in which are set down what they have been able to learn of the previous life history and ancestry of each child as well as the steps in their own care of him. They make careful physical examinations of their young charges and offer no child for adoption without informing the foster parents fully as to any chronic ailments, weaknesses, or defects. If these are so serious as to make adoption inadvisable, such agencies place the child either in a boarding home or in a small reception or study home while seeking to remedy them. Boarding home mothers for children needing any such special care are naturally selected with an eye to their special fitness for the work involved and willingness to undertake it. To an increasing degree such agencies also have psychometric tests or full psychological examinations made of the children they plan to place in permanent homes, and of other children as well, whenever any special problem which suggests mental diffi

culty presents itself. When such mental difficulties seem to demand it, certain agencies also have the child examined by a staff psychiatrist or arrange for study of him at a child guidance clinic.

It is evident that agencies which keep a careful history of each child and which offer the special services referred to will be able to answer most of the questions listed as those which prospective foster parents more or less habitually ask: to answer them, that is, so far as available history and present skills in the various fields covered permit the making of definite answers.

Let us see how far this is. Medical skills make it possible to give fairly definite assurance that a child is free from venereal taint, when such is the case, and a fairly definite bill of health in other respects; though no physician, of course, can foretell what may be the physical or mental sequelae of diseases later contracted. Fully trained, competent psychologists can give information as to probable future mental trends: whether the child is of average intelligence, or above or below average intelligence, or (if a baby) will probably prove to be so; whether (provided he is of school age and has had training in the three R's) he is free from, or subject to, special difficulties in reading, writing, or dealing with figures, which are likely to interfere with school progress; whether—if he is old enough to permit of testing—he possesses any marked special abilities or disabilities in other fields which tests can discover; whether, possibly, emotional blocking or special environmental or physical handicaps which he has been subject to may account for deficiencies or peculiarities in his test performances, so that his rating will be likely to improve in a later test, or whether anything in his personality or his background suggests that he may prove less capable as

time goes on. Case histories often give enough detail about one or both sides of the child's family tree so that an experienced person may judge with a fair degree of probability whether mental defect or mental disease constitutes a definite threat. The prospective foster parent who is served in these three ways will thus be forewarned if the child he is considering constitutes a worse-than average risk.

Whether or not, as a result of such a warning, he gives up the idea of taking the child in question will depend upon many things. In some families the requirement that a child prove able to attain a certain academic and cultural level is of supreme importance, and where this is the case the foster parents would certainly be unwise to take any but a child of definitely superior intelligence. However, even the assurance that a young child is highly superior does not carry with it a certainty that years later he will wish to apply his intelligence to distinguishing himself in college and a profession. The foster parent who sets his hopes upon the attainment of such a result is as ill advised as the own parent who does so. Perhaps if he were acquainted with some of the many households of professional men in which own children prove backward or asymmetrical in mental development or averse to applying good intelligence industriously, he would be better prepared for disappointment.

Fortunately for children who need foster homes, not all foster parents apply such standards. A large proportion of them, naturally, are rather incompletely educated and only moderately successful themselves, and accept their mediocre equipment and status with fair equanimity and without feeling any particular drive to force the next generation to compensate for their deficiencies. Some well endowed and highly cultured foster parents, moreover, take a different point of

view. However much they would be delighted to have a boy or girl they had reared attain distinction, they do not regard the child as in any sense bound to meet their wishes, and they recognize in how many different ways he may seek and find legitimate satisfactions. Some there are who even have cheerfully taken into their home a youngster known to be slightly subnormal, using their own superior intelligence not in seeking to draw him up to their level but in helping him to make a happy adjustment on his own. To undertake such a task one needs to have unusual understanding of the way in which our common human nature expresses itself and seeks satisfaction at different levels and under different pressures, and unusual patience and resourcefulness in dealing with those whose interests are wholly different from one's own. One needs, too, to be quite free from certain common misconceptions regarding the workings of heredity.

# Concerning Heredity

## WHAT DO FOSTER PARENTS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT IT?

Not a great deal, certainly, about scientific studies in this field; but enough to protect them from being bowled over by the weight of popular misconceptions if their foster child should get into difficulties which their own children or their neighbors' children have never presented, and which they find themselves unable to account for by causes operating under their eyes.

The commonest and most destructive of these misconceptions is that *faults and failings and patterns of behavior*, as well as desirable gifts, are transmitted as such, direct from parent to child, or sometimes skip a generation to crop up in a grandchild. If, for example, one of these immediate ancestors of the foster child was given to thieving or lived a sexually irregular life, how easy it is, if the youngster begins to purloin other children's pencils in first grade or indulges in sex play, to leap back in thought to these adult irregularities and forward to the conclusion that history is beginning to repeat itself.

The absurdity of any such conclusion becomes apparent when we delve a bit into the writings of some of our leading biologists. For from them we learn that the germ cells which united to form each one of us were not produced in the bodies of our parents; they were the descendants by division of the cells which originally united to form each of these two, and had been carried and nourished, but probably little modified, during their sojourn in the parent bodies. Probably no two of the many cells in each body contain precisely the same assort-

ment of the factors which are believed to influence future development in various ways, so that even children of the same marriage, with the possible exception of so-called identical twins, never start with precisely the same equipment for life, and the possibility of a child's proving a replica of either a parent or a grandparent is completely ruled out. The mingling of two lines of ancestry has been compared to "a mingling of two mosaics, each particle of which retains its individuality"<sup>1</sup>—but these particles are not developed traits. "There is no one on earth who can predict what combination of qualities will come from the union of any two normal individuals, and there never will be. 'Who toiled a slave may come again a prince' in the next generation,—by the working out of recombinations in heredity. . . . Knowledge of these open possibilities must inspire our efforts to help our children unfold what is in them; and must lend an interest to their progress that any false belief in a set and iron law of inheritance would crush out."<sup>2</sup>

But if "personalities are not absolutely predetermined in the germ cells from which we come," as another eminent authority tells us, how then are they determined? Here, in brief, is his explanation: "Adult characteristics are potential and not actual in the germ, and their actual appearance depends upon many complicated reactions of the germinal units with one another and with the environment. . . . There are many possible personalities in all of us, and what we actually are is only a fraction of what we might have been. . . . Since the environment cannot be all things at once many hereditary

<sup>1</sup> Michael F. Guver, *Being Well Born* (Indianapolis, The Bobbs Merrill Co., 1927), p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Herbert S. Jennings, "The Biology of Children in Relation to Education," *Suggestions of Modern Science Concerning Education* (New York, The Macmillan Co., 1921), pp. 13, 14.



possibilities must remain latent or undeveloped. Consequently the results of development are not determined by heredity alone but also by extrinsic causes."<sup>3</sup>

No wise person, it is safe to say, becomes a foster parent without the hope that he may so control the "extrinsic causes" that play upon the child as to bring out all that is best and most promising in him, while less desirable tendencies diminish and disappear. If in moments of discouragement he feels his grip on this hope weakening, it may count for something that true scientists as opposed to pseudo-scientists stand solidly behind him in attributing great importance to environment. There are of course instances where mental disease or defect loads the dice so heavily against some boy or girl that foster parents would have little chance to overcome its influence. But if they are dealing with a reliable agency they need have no fear that they will be permitted to assume, unwarned, the care of any such child, what is known and what remains unknown regarding each youngster will be stated with equal frankness.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Edw n Grant Conkln *Heredity and Environment in the Development of Men* (Princeton Princeton University Press 1922) pp 324 325

<sup>4</sup> If anyone is in doubt whether the agency with which he is dealing is reliable or if he suspects that it is withholding information which would make him hesitate to adopt the child it may be advisable to test out the frankness of those who direct it by insisting on definite answers to explicit questions.

# *Destructive Forces*

WHAT DO FOSTER PARENTS NEED TO KNOW  
ABOUT THE INFLUENCES THAT MAY TEND  
TO UPSET FOSTER HOME RELATIONSHIPS?

It is always a question whether and how far it is advisable to look on the darker possibilities of any enterprise one is going into, instead of exclusively on its bright side. Impulsive, warm-hearted people who do not stop to count the cost in advance often make the best of foster parents. People of a different temperament, however, while incapable of such uncalculating behavior, may yet be capable of becoming excellent foster parents to certain types of children.

The experiences of one bright boy whose mother had been mentally deficient illustrate several types of attitude in foster parents. After three and a half years in the home of a couple who had meant to adopt him, he was returned to the agency, at the age of seven, as a grave behavior problem, repeated stealing and fire setting had been two of his major delinquencies. His foster mother declared "We are afraid of our lives. I cannot break him. He will never tell me the truth. We have tried every kind of punishment, every kind of reward. I have reached the end. If he can be cured we'd like him back. . . . if not, he will be dead to us." This foster mother, it is worth noting, had taken the boy to please her husband, she herself had been wholly inexperienced in the care of children and had never been fond of them.

Presently this youngster was placed at board with a woman who had brought up two sons successfully and so felt pretty sure, she said, that she could manage a boy, though she was

not so sure of her ability to deal with a girl. She had applied for a child a few weeks before Christmas and had been so hopeful of having one for that festive occasion that she had bought and trimmed a handsome tree and purchased some toys. From the day of his arrival to the end of his stay, nearly a year later, Sammy gave Mrs. Brown no serious trouble, never once committing any of the misdemeanors which had so upset his first foster mother. He made an excellent record in school and seemed contented and happy at home.

During this year several visits were arranged for him to the homes of well-to-do people who were considering adopting him. All of these people liked Sammy, but one by one they regretfully gave up the plan of taking him because of the risks implied in his very poor family background. To his foster mother, who was puzzled by these repeated rejections of the boy, the agency visitor finally explained the reason for them. Mrs. Brown remarked that she "supposed educated people thought of those things, but for her part it was enough to know that Sammy was a nice boy who needed to be looked after." She and her husband kept him that summer free of charge, and would probably have continued to do so indefinitely if salary cuts and the man's uncertain tenure of his job had not undermined their financial position. Fortunately for Sammy, he was ultimately adopted by a couple who, though "educated," had the same point of view.

Not all of us are so constituted that we can run risks of this kind with equanimity. As has already been said, foster parents who set great store by an unbroken record of honorable distinction in one field or another, or who have brilliant children or nephews and nieces, are wise when they hesitate to take to themselves a small boy or girl who is likely to bring

keen disappointment and to feel himself inferior among such associates. Matching child to family is an important part of the art of child placing and when prospective foster parents feel strongly the need to take a promising child or one whose forebears resemble themselves in certain essential respects, a wise agency will do its utmost to meet their wishes.

Nevertheless, people who take up the search for a child in an anxious frame of mind and who find insuperable obstacles in every family tree presented for their inspection ought perhaps to consider whether they are not harboring some of the misconceptions regarding heredity referred to in the preceding section. Also, if none of their own ancestors or collaterals have ever been failures or guilty of discreditable behavior or mentally ill, it might help them to realize that such a record is somewhat exceptional, and that many honorable, wholesome men and women have successfully lived down family records as discouraging as those of most of the children under consideration. If they are unable to rid themselves of exaggerated fears it may be that these point to lack of real desire for a child, and that it will be wise for them to give up the project. For even a youngster with a flawless background (if any such exists) may quite possibly furnish examples of original sin or its modern equivalent which will upset the equilibrium of an overanxious foster parent.

It is doubtless true that not even the best balanced mother is ever entirely free of anxiety about her children. What is said above is intended to apply only to foster parents whose fears obviously (to themselves or others) rise above the usual level. For such fears, whether regarding heredity or health or failure in any undertaking, are not merely sources of unhappiness to parent and child; they actually have a

tendency to bring about the outcome dreaded. Even when there is an effort to conceal the fear and its causes from the child, the tension felt and the stress laid on undesirable trends is likely to keep his attention fixed on them to the exclusion of more wholesome interests. Where less discretion is used and the child comes to know the nature of the supposed threat to his future, he is in danger of yielding to the powerful suggestion that he is doomed to follow in the footsteps of parent or grandparent, or to fall a prey to the particular form of misfortune that is dreaded for him.

Fears and anxieties for a foster child are of course by no means the only emotional forces that may wreck his happiness and his future. Like own parents, foster parents may surround a child with an overdevotion that tends to make him unduly dependent, or may domineer over him in ways subtle or crude. They may overstress ideals too difficult for him to live up to, may insist that he fall in with educational or other plans laid down for him and put being a credit to the family above the following out of his own interests and tastes. Since the foster child will be less likely than the own child to resemble the parents, we may assume that pressures such as these will be less likely to produce the desired conformity to parental wishes, and that the strain to which the growing boy or girl is subjected will be even more severe. Again, in the foster home as in any other, favoritisms, antagonisms, and jealousies may spoil relationships. If there are own as well as foster children in the household, parents will perhaps be more aware than in normal family life of the danger that such feelings may take root, and so may guard against them more carefully. Yet again, mistaken ideas on child nature, on sex, and on discipline may interfere with wise management. All these dangers have been fully discussed

elsewhere<sup>1</sup> and no important new aspects of them peculiar to the foster home situation suggest themselves. So far as the writer is aware, only one emotion besides fear tends to take on a somewhat special intensity and direction when a foster child is concerned.

That emotion is pity.

It is not at all surprising that foster parents should frequently feel pity for the youngsters they are called upon to minister to. The forlorn state of many children at the time they are placed in boarding homes is a sufficient explanation. How, it may be asked, can a normally sympathetic foster mother help pitying (for example) a girl who comes to her from a wretchedly unhappy institutional life, whose mother is in a hospital for the mentally diseased, whose father is an unreliable floater, who has never known security and seldom experienced kindness?—or a little orphaned boy who still declares, months after his mother's death, that he wants to live with nobody but that mother? Yet the experience of being pitied, even apart from the overindulgence that often accompanies it, is in itself an unwholesome, a debilitating one in that it almost inevitably tends to awaken or strengthen self-pity. Conversely, the habit of pitying others, especially when there is something more practically helpful that might be done, is a form of self-indulgence and may even reflect a tendency to self-pity in the pitier. The foster mother who talks about "these poor little children" and recounts their misfortunes to her friends and neighbors is likely to prove a menace to them even though her kindness is unfailing.

The pity here referred to is, of course, something quite different from that instant leap of sympathy and concern for

<sup>1</sup> See Mary Buell Sayles, *The Problem Child at Home* (New York, The Commonwealth Fund, 1928), pp. 28-112.

an unfortunate which expresses itself in helpful activity; quite different also from the feeling which prompts a wise foster mother to hold herself ever ready to receive any confidences which her young charge may be moved to make; for every young thing needs someone to confide in, most of all he whose burdens are heaviest. The truth would seem to be that anyone whose mind is actively alert to signs and symptoms of special need, anyone whose imagination is seeking the most helpful way of handling a difficult or unhappy youngster in a particular situation, will be too occupied to indulge a feeling of pity. As a foster mother of this type summed the matter up on a certain occasion: "If you do the right thing by the poor orphan you don't have to feel sorry for her."

*One of the unfortunate aspects of pitying indulgence on a foster mother's part is that it is likely to be self-limiting and may lead to a sharp reversal of feeling and policy. It could hardly be expected that the foster child whose misfortunes inspire the pity would display much resistance to an indulgent attitude, and if he yields to the sudden temptation to let others assume responsibilities he has heretofore been forced to carry, who can wonder? Thus one foster mother insisted that a delicate adolescent girl placed with her should cease to do her own laundry work. Less than a year later this same woman recites a long list of instances of the girl's laziness, among which her neglect of washing her clothing figures. This is not an argument for suppression of generous impulses or for sternly refusing to lighten burdens merely because they are customary. It is merely a suggestion that it might be well to estimate rather carefully one's own capacity for seeing a thing through, as well as the other's need and probable reaction, before interfering with habits that make for independence.*

The essential trouble with pity is that it tends to set its object apart, in his own eyes and the eyes of others; and the last thing one should encourage in a foster child is the feeling that he is different from other children and more unfortunate than they are. As is the case with a cripple or an invalid, what he needs is to have the differences between himself and others minimized, to be treated like, and helped to think of himself as like, any normal child. True parental tenderness will help him so to think of himself, and of this blessed commodity he is unlikely ever to receive too much.

To the reader of this chapter it may seem surprising that all the destructive forces thus far emphasized have been emotional forces emanating from the foster parents. Why not (the prospective foster father or mother may say) tell us of the dangers and threats to peace and happiness which the foster child may let loose upon our devoted heads?

It is true that the child who comes into the foster home may behave in any of the upsetting ways which the young of our species has ever been known to exhibit. *But not in any new way.* That would be impossible! Volumes galore have been written—by experts in education, in psychology, in psychiatry—upon the problems of childhood and youth. This brief sketch attempts to deal only with what is peculiar to the foster child and his setting, and no behavior problem has this distinctive character. If to the foster parents any particular iniquity seems characteristic of the foster child as such, let them look about them and they will not fail to find own parents a-plenty who are struggling with similar difficulties.

No: it is not about possible misbehavior on the part of the child that foster parents need to know more, if they would avert future trouble; but about the divided loyalties, the con-



fused affections, the overlapping memories, the peculiarly intense feeling of insecurity, which so often handicap the foster child and may spoil their own relationship with him

This does not mean that foster parents should make it their business to subject the child to inquisition regarding these matters, on the contrary, direct approaches of the sort are seldom advisable. While reactions in a child which are inexplicable by what is known of his history naturally puzzle and pique those who care for him, it is important that these adults realize how incapable most young children are of sorting out memories, relating past events correctly and in order, and formulating in words the feelings associated with them, and how much emotional disturbance may result from an effort to do so. Probing into a child's past is, however, no more unwise than closing the door upon it, for any confidences he may offer and any tales he may tell should find a willing ear. To permit one's curiosity to be visibly stirred by strange stories, to show shocked surprise at reported doings or sayings, to be goaded by inconsistencies and exaggerations into efforts to check up on the teller's accuracy—all these are mistakes to which inexperienced foster parents are liable. To avoid them we need to remember how fantasy and reality interweave even in the mind of a child who has lived all his life in one stable environment, we need to resign ourselves to never fully understanding our young charge or his background (though we need never stop trying to do so), we need to accept him as a mysterious being, belonging partly to *his past and partly to his future, whom we can serve by making his present as secure and bright as possible so that he may learn to look forward with courage*

One of the incalculable things about this mysterious being is the extent of his curiosity about his past, his parents, and

his family background generally. No intelligent adult who remembers his own childhood needs to be reminded how easily a child is discouraged in his attempts at expression where his deeper feelings are involved. There are foster children whose memories are full enough, their understanding sufficiently developed, so that they are conscious of no need for any interpretation of the past. But multitudes of others wonder and conjecture, weave dream-stories or exhaust imagination in more realistic search for an explanation of the silences or the ambiguous remarks of the adults who surround them.

What then are the foster parents to do, when to give information asked will, they believe, result in serious harm? This is a question to which no general answer can be made, since no two situations are ever alike. Two age-old methods of meeting difficulties will, of course, work no better here than elsewhere in life. Out-and-out denial of unpalatable facts may relieve anxiety for the time being, but a day of reckoning will almost certainly come when an undermined faith in the foster parent will make adjustment to these facts more difficult. Evasion of the issue raised by the child's questions will merely invite him to use his imagination more intensely or to seek under cover for the facts withheld. A statement that he is not yet old enough to understand, that at some future time, designated or undesignated, all his questions will be answered, has the merit of honesty, but in no way meets the child's present needs. His demand for information may prove irrepressible, but if it is repressed, the imaginings to which it may lead are likely to surpass reality and may prove upsetting in ways that his elders, congratulating themselves on having met the situation adequately, will never guess. Perhaps, in some cases, there is really no alternative to such an answer, but usually a simple, unemotional statement of a

part-truth will leave the child less to wonder and worry about than a blank denial of all information.<sup>2</sup>

Still another group of forces may tend to upset relationships in boarding homes visited by a child's own parents. From the challenge of these forces most persons who give free homes to children, with or without adoption, are protected by the agency which does the placing; as are also boarding homes utilized by agencies which receive only children who are legally separated from parents. Many foster parents refuse to consider taking a child unless such protection is assured. Natural and understandable as is this state of mind, it is fortunate indeed that there are persons equally well equipped for child care who do not share it. For multitudes of children with living parents are without suitable homes of their own and desperately need good foster homes.

*It is not our intention to imply that own parents usually set disrupting forces in motion in the foster home. Many visiting parents are devoted to their children and consistently back every effort of the foster parents to promote the youngsters' well-being and happiness. Many others, however, are too unhappy and frustrated, or too handicapped by nature and early experience, to be consistent about anything; and still others—these probably a small minority—are consistently unhelpful to the substitutes who are trying to handle their job.*

Naturally it is easier to function as a foster parent when visiting parents do not set in motion conflicting cross-currents of authority, or confuse the child by unkept promises and talk of taking him home which comes to nothing, or first neglect

<sup>2</sup> A wise woman with long experience in child placing says that it is better to tell the child a few clear, definite facts—for example, that his father ran away and left his mother—than to leave him to frame his own guesses

him and then overwhelm him with caresses: to mention only a few of the unsettling practices one finds recorded in histories of placed-out children. Foster parents are of course not paragons who never react with irritation to irritating behavior on the part of adult visitors; those in charge of boarding homes are, however, a picked group—chosen in part for ability to maintain poise in just such difficult situations as immature or ill-balanced own fathers and mothers sometimes stir up in the home. How they do it is a point seldom dwelt upon in case records. Such hints as the writer has been able to gather will be set down in a later section.

# *Constructive Forces*

WHAT OUGHT FOSTER PARENTS TO KNOW ABOUT  
THE EMOTIONAL NEEDS OF FOSTER CHILDREN AND  
ABOUT CONSTRUCTIVE WAYS OF MEETING THEM?

In a sense, all the rest of this volume will seek to tell about such needs and ways of responding to them. Part II, with its stories of individual children and their foster parents, offers what we conceive to be more important in this connection than any abstract discussion—a series of concrete examples of situations and of the helpful (or unhelpful) attitudes and activities of adults called upon to meet them. The beginning foster parent or other person vitally interested in working out a chart by which to steer her course through a welter of complicated human relationships to the benefit of some child will find here stuff worth mulling over. In comparison, any summing up in general terms of characteristics exemplified in these and other cases can hardly fail to sound trite and commonplace. Nevertheless, for the sake of those abstract-minded persons who form a minority in every audience, such a summing up will be attempted.

In her efforts to find the ways in which she may help her foster child most effectively, the foster mother<sup>1</sup> may be aided if she pauses briefly to consider what are the emotional needs that all children have in common, and then, what special aspects of these needs stand out in the case of foster children.

Elsewhere<sup>2</sup> the writer has discussed the emotional needs of

<sup>1</sup> Though 'foster mother' is used commonly throughout this discussion, most of what is said of her applies to both foster parents.

<sup>2</sup> *The Problem Child at Home* (New York: The Commonwealth Fund, 1928).

children under four heads. First and most fundamental is the need of security; since, without the fostering love and care of persons upon whom the child can unquestioningly rely from earliest infancy, not only is his physical survival jeopardized, but his social development is almost equally threatened. Next comes the need of freedom to grow: a need sometimes denied by devoted parents who overprotect their children and hold them too close, and by authoritative parents whose need to dominate is a ruling passion; so that between the granting of freedom and the maintaining of security a careful reciprocal relationship, or balance, best insures happy, harmonious development.

If we pause here to meditate a moment on these two related needs, we shall hardly hesitate as to which of them the foster child has usually lacked. There is of course no uniformity of background among these children; an occasional one even steps direct from the overprotective arms of a dotting mother into his first foster home. If death or mortal illness has forced the separation—and few other forces can separate such a mother from her child—that child may experience, in an hour, transition from the extreme of security to the extreme of insecurity. A devoted father who continues to visit may mitigate the severity of the contrast, a deeply maternal foster mother may swiftly find her way to the child's heart. But since he is only too likely to be a badly spoiled youngster, she cannot even attempt to be to him all that his mother was: her problem will be one of easing him gradually into a sound relationship to those about him—one in which he no longer merely waits to be served, but assumes his share of responsibility for serving others. In bringing about this change, so vital to his future growth, the foster mother will be greatly aided if she has older, well-trained

children of her own—preferably one of the same sex as the foster child, whose lead he may gladly and even proudly follow

Far more common, to judge by our record reading, are the cases in which foster children lost what security they had long before they came to the foster home, or never had a chance to develop any. Children whose parents have separated after long and bitter quarreling are typical of the one group, those abandoned, or rejected from birth, or taken from parents at an early age, who have since lived in institutions, or knocked about among unfriendly relatives or strangers, may stand for the other

In nearly all such children there are wounds, often carefully hidden under a withdrawing or an aggressive exterior, which need the tenderest handling on the part of a discerning foster mother. Yet the nature of the treatment called for may vary as widely as in two cases presented in our narratives that of Steven, placed alone with a foster mother whose maternal interests he need share only with a large family of cats and dogs (themselves a therapeutic aid of no mean value),<sup>3</sup> and that of Vincent, whose baseball bat, athletic foster father, and two big foster brothers, seem to have bulked quite as large in his program of recovery as did the kind and sensible mother of the family.<sup>4</sup> Which of these boys had known more complete insecurity we could probably not say, even if the full story of each were recorded for us in three-volume novel style. Their histories have been utterly different, their natures and modes of reacting represent extremes of opposite tendencies. Profound, too, is the difference between the complete mother-substitute role gradually assumed by the foster mother of the one boy, and the temporary friendly relation-

<sup>3</sup> *A Boy Who Wore a*

<sup>4</sup> *His Father's Son*

ship to her charge of the woman who cared for the other—the only possible relationship in a case where an own mother might at any moment resume custody of her unloved son.

In endeavoring to help a child attain the security he has lost or never had, the foster mother needs, of course, to provide all the conditions that have previously been lacking in his life. She needs, above all, to be reliable—a person who is there when needed, not merely in a physical or literal but in a spiritual or metaphorical sense. To stabilize a drifting universe for another human being is a job probably beyond the power of any individual; but a foster mother who is stable and dependable can make a great contribution to that end.

Hardly less essential than reliability, however, is imagination: at least a modicum of imagination—enough so that she will understand spontaneously, or can be led to realize, that no woman can just walk in and occupy the place of an absent mother, taking possession as if that place were hers by right. For the place, however empty it may seem, is never quite so, even if the biological parent was unknown to the child. At the least, it is inhabited by a ghost—the ghost of one dimly remembered and idealized, or of one imagined, perhaps with such intensity that it will be long before her image fades or merges into that even of a dearly loved substitute. When a real mother has been long and tenderly known, her presence may be too near and precious ever to be replaced; if she is still living, no normal woman would wish to replace her. At the worst, the mysterious spot reserved in our inner economy for filial feeling may be so filled by yearning for a living individual who has no wish to occupy it—a mother as indifferent or unnatural as some of those encountered in our reading—that even the tenderest and most understanding of substitutes can scarcely gain a foothold there. For this reason it is



probably wise always to let the child choose what he shall call the foster mother—casually mentioning, perhaps, various possible titles, and, except with small and obviously clinging youngsters, to reserve physical demonstration of affection till some tentative movement indicative of a desire for it on the part of the child gives the cue. How reserved or how lavish of such demonstration the foster mother should ultimately be, no one may venture to say, the natures and needs of both adults and children being so diverse as they are. We recall, in this connection, an explanation given by a woman nearing ninety for the distaste she had always shown for what she regarded as sloppy sentiment—her efforts, in particular, to avoid the kisses of those she did not deeply love. Observers were inclined to attribute this apparent distaste to natural coldness, she herself explained it by the fact that an auntie who lived with her parents when she was tiny had poured out her devotion for the little thing in an unending stream of caresses. Perhaps another child might have responded to these caresses with enthusiasm, but we have known history to repeat itself often enough so that it seems appropriate to suggest to foster parents that they look very carefully, before forming a habit of kissing and embracing a small charge, for indications that such expressions of affection are as welcome to him or her as they are pleasurable to themselves.

The above warning, however, covers less than half of what insists upon being said about the expression of affection. That every child needs love and the comforting certainty of it that physical contacts give, the writer is as sure as any devoted parent in the world. How ungracious seeming, then, to point out that the very fact of a youngster's enthusiastic reception of caresses may be as good a reason for exercising a measure of self restraint as his reluctance would be, since the ultimate

goal of freedom from dependence on his elders is never to be lost sight of

Fortunately, in addition to this primitive, irreplaceable expression of love, how many others the human race has evolved! Often, for the substitute taking on the care of a boy or girl concerning whose first decade of life (more or less) she knows only a few outstanding facts, it is wiser to concentrate first on the more recently evolved, more intellectually transmuted forms of expression. Experimentally putting out one feeler after another, she will almost certainly discover things in which the youngster is already interested or in which his interest can be awakened, and will find ways to facilitate his pursuit of hobbies, his cultivation of aptitudes. Encouraging him to freedom of expression, she may chance upon fears and anxieties which she can help him lay at rest, old troubling questions which possibly she can answer, to his relief, she may be able to surprise and comfort him by relating parallel experiences, similar torments of doubt and dread, which will help him to feel himself less solitary and "different." If his major need is to become a "regular fellow" accepted by his herd, she may—within limits—help him toward his goal by making other youngsters welcome in the home, by providing equipment for play, by encouraging him to try again where he has failed, and reasoning out with him avoidable errors in his relations to others. In numberless ways she can thus give expression to an interest and concern which, as the child senses them and comes to rely on them, may lay the foundation for genuine mutual love. How different from a direct frontal attack, a proffering, by a stranger, of what may seem to a sadly experienced youngster a spurious imitation of something priceless

What has been said applies particularly to boarding par-

ents, who are seldom justified in assuring a child in so many words that his wanderings have come to an end in their home; an assurance which to many an adopted child has untold value. Yet even the child who has been since babyhood with devoted adopting parents who have done all in their power to prevent a doubt as to the permanency of the relationship from creeping in—even such a child may need constant reassurance as he mingles with other children and begins to sense the difference between their status and his own. It is necessary for the foster parents to realize that an initial explanation regarding his origin and how he came to them, made to any child, under whatever circumstances, may prove no more than a starting-point. Again and again (if the youngster feels free to talk out what is in his mind) will the same old questions be likely to come bobbing up in various guises calling for a patience and an ingenuity in finding satisfying answers, on the part of the foster parents, which are as essential as love itself to the ultimate achievement of the security they are seeking to help establish.

Freedom to grow, the second fundamental need of childhood, appears to take on no such special significance in the foster relationship as does security: separation from own parents implies no necessary decrease or increase in the likelihood of the child's enjoying it. Interference with growth through overprotection and spoiling may be less frequent, interference through domination and harshness more frequent—but who shall say? Adopting parents have been known to spoil an attractive child as thoroughly as any doting own parents, and no foster parent of any ilk could more completely domineer over and crush out initiative in a youngster than do certain own parents known to schools and agencies which

handle the problems of the young. Freedom to grow, on the other hand, may often seem to have meant, with boys and girls who come to a foster home, merely freedom to grow away; but this is no less true of the children in many a home that still holds together.

Similarly without peculiar significance, in the case of foster children, are the two other forms of emotional need discussed in the earlier volume referred to above: need of a concrete ideal to grow toward, and need of adult companionship. It goes without saying that the child who has lost a parent by death, or whose parent has failed him in any one of many possible ways, needs a substitute who shall supply his need for an adult model—one sound and wholesome, but not so lofty and severe in aspect as to prove unapproachable and discouraging to aspiration. Equally it goes without saying that such a child needs to find in his foster parents the companionship his own parents can no longer give, or never gave him: companionship which shall furnish him with the safety-valve all youngsters need in the chance to talk himself out. Through this sharing of experience, it may be that the substitute parents will gain opportunity to serve as interpreters and guides in situations too difficult for a boy or girl to untangle alone.

There are, of course, foster children fortunate enough to be visited by a father or mother who still serves as fit model and dear companion, who has always permitted freedom to grow, and who provides a measure of security even if visits must be infrequent. When such is the case, the foster parents' responsibility is lessened, since they need only supplement (on the mental or emotional plane) the services which the own parent continues to perform. Yet supplementing a service is sometimes a more delicate and difficult task than per-

forming that service entire, since it presupposes a harmony between the purposes and methods of adults of different background which (even with good will on both sides) is not easy of attainment. How much greater, then, are the difficulties faced by foster parents in cases where the models supplied by visiting parents are such as no socially responsible person can wish to see reproduced in their offspring; when freedom is restricted, insecurity obviously increased, by visits; when there is neither comfort nor any true satisfaction for the child in the travesty of companionship the parent offers him.

It is easy to imagine, at this point, a group of potential foster parents rising up as one man to proclaim that never would they accept a child with such a parent—perhaps, never a child with *any* parent who is permitted to visit him.

There are, of course, many people who feel that way. Some of them make good foster parents to normal youngsters without family ties. Fortunately there are other adults who love children even more; to whom the appeal of a desperately unhappy, thwarted boy or girl who has never known love or peace is strong enough to carry them through the worst ordeals that the most difficult child or the most irresponsible, misguided visiting father or mother can impose. There are Mrs. Tolman<sup>5</sup> and Mrs. MacIntyre<sup>5</sup>—and others like them: not a huge company, but a select group of fine spirits who have proved that they will go through personal inconveniences and unpleasantnesses without number rather than give up the task they have undertaken of helping some unhappy youngster get a new start.

Soon we shall come to the stories of a few of these foster parents and their young charges. As a final stage in our jour-

<sup>5</sup> See "*Pure Motherly*" and "*Not a Mother*"

ney to them we offer a brief discussion of some of the essential ingredients, as they appear to us, of the attitudes and points of view which have made it possible for such foster parents to render the services they have performed.

# *The Own Parent*

WHAT ATTITUDES AND POINTS OF VIEW AID FOSTER PARENTS TO DEAL HELPFULLY WITH FOSTER CHILDREN AND WITH OWN PARENTS AND OTHER RELATIVES?

Much that has been written earlier bears upon conditions basic to helpful relationships with foster children. Here we are thinking more especially of boarding homes visited by the parents of these children. While the child without parents of course often presents problems which call for the highest skill, foster parents whose duties include dealing with visiting adults as well as children have a somewhat different set of adjustments to make, and certain attitudes helpful in all cases assume for them a special importance.

The fact that a child to be placed in a foster home has a parent who will visit him does not of course mean that in himself he is different from other children to be placed. Of any age, with any sort of mental and physical equipment, sound and vigorous or handicapped in any of a wide variety of ways, friendly and confident or the reverse, essentially free from or involved to some degree in behavior difficulties, coming direct from a good home recently broken by death or illness, from a mediocre home, from a desperately bad one, or from years in an institution: in one respect only—the fact that there is still a visible link between them and their past—are these youngsters alike. For many of them this link means a degree of stability, someone to be counted on for love and interest, hope of reunion in a home of their own; for others it means none of these things—perhaps, instead, a mere keeping alive of old pains and fears and uncertainties,

an interference with the process of settling down and adjusting themselves happily to the present environment.

An effort to view any situation as a child views it, unless based on memories, must be largely imaginative. "What the baby thinks about" has been a favorite subject of at least one cartoonist and is a fair field for speculation on the part of any adult. An infant in arms who has spent most of his few months with his own mother will probably miss her particular way of handling him and playing with him and need a few days to become accustomed to a new person and new routines, but in the hands of a skilled foster mother hardly more than that, if he was weaned before the change took place. If his mother comes to see him regularly once a week or so, he will continue to recognize her, and (if she loves him and shows any skill at all in handling him) to respond to her. But sometimes, before he comes to the foster home, he has been in a hospital or other institution and so long separated from his mother that he hardly knows her; sometimes, after he is placed, the mother's visits lapse for a period of some weeks because of her illness or for other reasons, and when she comes again he behaves toward her as though he had never seen her before. Such episodes, which to the mother are certain to be painful and may be catastrophic, and to the foster mother are likely to be full of poignancy, will (so far as anyone can judge) leave a young baby untouched. A wise foster mother who refuses to take the situation too seriously and does her utmost to help the mother renew intimacy with the child, may be able to bridge the difficulty; and soon, as he grows into a toddler, her talk to him about his mother, her preparation of him for visits so that he will be ready with a warm welcome, can be made to count for a great deal in the relationship of parent and child. Furthermore, such an atti-



tude helps promote a relationship between mother and foster mother which, so long as the child remains in the foster home, may be basic to his happiness there

Children placed when older, whose relation with their parents has been close and happy, will not need such reminders, but often older children, too, have been much separated from mother or father and have, perhaps, as many unhappy as happy memories of them, so that there is still room for the playing of a helpful role in setting the stage for visits, reminding the youngster of things mother will be interested in hearing about or seeing, and so on. In an extreme situation of parent rejection such as is sketched in one of the narratives<sup>1</sup> one may find the whole foster family, with its friendly good fellowship and cordiality, forming a background against which the mother's attitude toward her son is subtly modified

Of course, even a wise and tactful foster parent cannot always promote harmony or better understanding. The writer recalls the case of a young girl growing up under the wing of a foster mother who had done much to make up to her for the misfortune of having been the unwanted child of a rough, coarse woman. This "own mother" was in the habit, when she visited, of slapping her daughter. The foster mother, having seen this happen several times, requested the mother not to strike the child again. After this the mother's attitude toward the foster mother changed from a cordial to a critical one. Such crises may arise and have to be handled thus directly, but oftentimes soft answers do turn away wrath and friendly attitudes induce kinder moods.

Returning to more normal and usual situations, it is easy

<sup>1</sup> See *His Father's Son*

to see that when parents are ready to share their children's love with foster parents the children will be spared all sorts of painful tensions. For how is a boy or girl to keep a wealth of warm outgoing feeling in cold storage (as it were) for a parent who comes to see him, perhaps, once a week? Inevitably the everyday substitute parent who is worth her or his salt is drawing forth all sorts of responses that in ordinary circumstances would go to the own mother and father; if it were not so the child would be missing normal stages in development. Just as the wise parent in his own home looks tolerantly upon a youngster's devotion to nurse or teacher, so the visiting parent needs to accept and approve his affection for a foster mother—not only for the sake of the child, but for that of the child's final relationship to him or herself. For what is jealously claimed is often held with difficulty.

If the child visited by one parent is sometimes confused between what he should reserve for that one and what he may give his everyday acting parents, what of the situation of the child visited by two parents who are at war?

Both everyday life and fiction have so thoroughly familiarized us all with the destructive effects of such parental competition for a child that perhaps it is worth while here merely to note the influence which life in an harmonious foster home may have upon the children of warring parents. Here, at least, they may learn that members of some families are affectionate and considerate of one another; may, like little invalids, have a chance to rest and recuperate between crises. Usually arrangements will be made for the parents to visit at different times so that at least the children will be spared the sight and sound of open quarreling. Foster parents who are wise will be careful not to "take sides." By encourag-

ing talk, during visiting hours, about the children and their doings, and so far as possible keeping clear of the shoals of matrimonial recrimination, by suggesting, always, in response to the child's questions, the most forgivable explanation of parental lapses that can be made at all convincing, the foster mother will do her utmost to minimize difficulties and build up an understanding, non-judgmental attitude in the child. How far she may succeed will depend not only upon her skill but upon many factors beyond her control, as the parents' actual current behavior, the extent to which previous experiences have scarred the child's mind, the length of time she can keep the child under her care.

It is evident that the variety of social situations which a foster parent who takes children to board may conceivably be called upon to meet is inexhaustible and that some of them will call for rather exceptional skill. Nevertheless no one genuinely interested in children who is considering making application to an agency for a child to board need be alarmed at these possibilities, for experienced agencies are well aware that few persons, if any, are fitted to deal with all types of children and adult visitors. The representatives of such an agency are accustomed to draw applicants out with regard to their own childhood experiences and later experiences with children, and to take into account their estimates of their own abilities and limitations, as well as the judgment of persons given as references. Moreover, when such an agency has a child in mind who may fit into a certain home, it will always send a visitor to talk matters over with the prospective foster mother. This visitor will tell her enough about the child, his personal assets and liabilities and his history, and about anyone who will visit him in the home, to enable her to decide

whether she cares to undertake his care. Thus she cannot be committed to anything if she does not choose to commit herself, and should difficulties prove much greater than she has been led to expect, the way of retreat is always open to her. Usually in making a first placement in an untried home an agency (unless there is reason to believe it an exceptional one) will refrain from asking that it undertake a case of exceptional difficulty. If the foster mother shows wisdom in meeting everyday needs and minor emergencies and proves both self-reliant and ready to seek the agency's help when she needs it, confidence and a good understanding will grow between the two and she may find herself disposed, after a time, to undertake responsibilities which at first she would not have felt equal to. Nothing, however, will be demanded of her which she feels to be beyond her strength and skill.

Since both foster children and their visiting relatives may, as has been indicated, be of almost any type with any sort of background, there are not many generally applicable suggestions that may be offered foster parents with regard to desirable attitudes and behavior. There are, however, a few—obvious enough to any thoughtful person, yet perhaps worth running through here.

Consider first the children. Some need only a continuation of the intelligent, affectionate care they have received. Needless to say, these are the easiest to provide for. Others, early separated from loving parents, or mere by-products of selfish indulgence who were never wanted, have had an unpromising start. Yet of these a fair proportion are built of thoroughly sound materials, and only a small minority are hopelessly handicapped. It is evident that those who are to assume

charge of any such youngsters need above all to be people of abounding hopefulness and courage who live a day at a time and will not waste energy in backward glances or permit themselves to be dominated by fears regarding hereditary handicaps or the persistence of early influences. Many people with a somewhat somber outlook are too accustomed to "weighing probabilities" and "viewing with alarm" to be temperamentally fitted for this particular type of responsibility. To undertake it one needs a habit of cheerfulness which perhaps always rests on a foundation of good health, an unwearying interest in the practical, everyday affairs of life, and a habit of making much of every scrap of encouragement that comes one's way. And one needs to be quite sure that one really enjoys dealing with immature minds; for unless one does, it is unlikely that even an ardent desire to be helpful will carry one through.

Again, it is worth while to remember a point already dwelt upon elsewhere: that all save the tiniest babies bring to their foster home an assortment of memories. Sometimes these are clearly etched, sometimes so confused and inchoate that they cannot be formulated in words. A series of impressions received in different settings may have been superimposed upon one another as in repeated exposures of a photographic plate till the child is quite unable to sort out those which were received in a particular place or from a particular person. He may seldom mention events and people in his past, or he may talk of them a great deal; if he seems to contradict himself, it will usually be well to let the matter slide without attempting any check-up on his accuracy. The foster mother's concern is with his present, and while her relationship with him will ideally be an open one which permits him to tell her anything and to ask her any question, her major aim is to keep him so

happily occupied that the time he spends in remembering will not be excessive and will tend to decrease.

It would be a mistake, of course, to suppose that any present, however happy, can wholly blot out an unhappy past. Foster parents may sometimes feel a strong impulse to grapple directly with such a past. Even professionally trained persons who have devoted years to studies of memory content do not, however, find it easy to deal helpfully with disturbing recollections. Foster parents will perhaps be wise if they not only resolutely refuse to indulge curiosity at the expense of the child, but confine themselves, when vestiges of his past life crop up, to simple common-sense procedures. These will include refraining from any expression of shocked surprise over a youngster's revelations, and from condemnation of sayings and doings of his parents, as reported by him or as observed. It may indeed become necessary to say that in this house we do not say or do such and such things and that while the child is here we would like him to conform to our ways, but the point can be made without overemphasis or a manner which indicates disturbed feeling. The loyalty of a child to his own parents, even when they have ill-treated him, is usually deep-seated, and unless these parents are such reprehensible characters that it is necessary to seek legal protection for him from them, it is important to avoid rousing in him the feeling that he must defend them, which will involve conflict for him and reaction against the foster parents, perhaps even a more or less deliberate resolve to emulate the disapproved-of ones. Respect for other people's rights and conformity to generally recognized norms of behavior must of course be taught him, but these will seldom come into direct conflict with avowed parental standards. When they do, the contrast may often be disregarded or minimized. If a

point is reached, with an older boy or girl, where hard questions must be answered, they should of course be answered honestly though as gently and tactfully as possible.<sup>2</sup>

Consider next the visiting parents. Among attitudes that will prove helpful in dealing with them the first that comes to mind is one widely preached in these days, and less widely practiced: *an attitude of tolerance.*

Foster parents of certain boys and girls never visited by a relative may be justified in feeling that no situation could demand more of this quality than some they have had to meet. Yet, on the average, it is probably easier for people who are (as we say) "fond of children" to tolerate the peculiarities of the young than it is to tolerate those of other adults whose standards and outlook on life are more set, and set usually in molds different from their own. Where parents visit, however, it is absolutely necessary for the sake of the child not only to satisfy them as to the care he is receiving but to put them personally at ease, to find sufficient common ground with them so that their visits shall bring them some measure of satisfaction. This they will assuredly not experience if they feel themselves looked down upon or condescended to. At the same time it is essential that the foster home shall command their full respect.

In what has just been written it was not at all intended to imply that own parents of foster children usually have lower standards than foster parents; people of excellent back-

<sup>2</sup> For example, it became necessary in one case reviewed to inform two adolescent girls that their mother (who still wrote to them occasionally after years of separation, and still made efforts to secure their return to her home) was a prostitute. The skill with which the telling was done (by a psychiatrist) seems proven by the girls' calm acceptance of the situation and their subsequent good adjustment. They had memories of early years with their mother which now for the first time were adequately explained. Did this aid them to make the adjustment?

ground and education may be forced by circumstances to seek the aid that placing agencies offer, and people who have enjoyed few advantages may have gentle manners and standards of essential breeding not easy to satisfy. It is however a fact that the own-parent group includes all sorts of people, and inevitably so, since the needs of children are the chief factor in determining placement in foster homes; while the foster-parent group serving a high type of agency is carefully picked so that it is definitely above average in character and stability and except by gross error contains no one who is antisocial or living a life in conflict with established mores. When parents and foster parents are in agreement on fundamental issues and have a similar outlook on life, a major source of difficulty in placement is absent. It is the cases where there is wide disparity that throw into high relief certain traits which are here indispensable—among them, this of tolerance.

Surprising though it may be to some readers, the intellectually based traits of tolerance and broadmindedness seem as likely to be possessed by persons of limited schooling as by those who have had opportunities for wide culture. Only persons who have some realization of their own limitations of understanding and some interest in and sympathy for people of a different sort, only persons who recognize how different life experiences influence everyone's attitudes and behavior, are prepared to receive as visitors individuals who differ strikingly from themselves in background and outlook. No foster parent, of course, is expected to make intimate friends of a foster child's parents. These parents come primarily to see their children and may desire nothing so much as to be left alone with the youngsters. In the ordinary small house or apartment complete separation may not, however, be prac-



ticable; usually, too, the parent will want to hear how things have been going since the last visit, or there will be an impulse on one side or the other to talk over details of health or management, or the latest school report, or any of the scores of questions that are forever thrusting themselves to the fore where children are concerned. Often it may be the part of wisdom to confine conversation rather closely to the one common field of interest, but to do so invariably over a long period of time will rarely be practicable, and artificial restrictions cannot be laid down in advance. In the course of weekly or monthly meetings over a period of years a wide range of topics will probably be introduced by the visitors and a good deal of discretion may need to be exercised by the hosts if the atmosphere is to be kept temperate and friendly. If they have a sympathetic interest in people of different races and groups, a desire to understand what lies back of unlikeness, and an ability to be tolerant of the prejudices of others, they will be well equipped for their job.

This brings us to social traits that are as essential as the intellectual ones that have been mentioned. That a foster parent needs to be an outgoing, friendly person goes without saying; yet it is almost equally important that she—and he—be not effusive or overimpulsive. People who meet for the first time usually appear more alike than they really are; they conform to conventions and conceal differences of opinion as they will not do later on. A foster mother can be cordial and hospitable without committing herself hastily to more than she and her husband may be able to perform or live up to in the future. This implies a power to reserve judgment and take a long view ahead. It does not imply lack of warmth and kindly feeling.

There are other aspects of reserve that are equally impor-

tant. Capacity for keeping one's personal affairs to oneself and respect for the reserves of other people, perhaps equally needed in this situation, happily often go together. Whatever a visiting parent may confide, either at the beginning or as acquaintance progresses, needs to be carefully guarded from relatives and neighbors; what the parent chooses not to confide, the wise foster parent will refrain from speculating about—even (so far as possible!) from wondering about. Any attempt to pry into the personal affairs of a child's relatives demonstrates unfitness for a job that calls for dignity and a measure of detachment. A confirmed gossip is one of the last people to be trusted in the role of foster parent.

Along with the intellectual and social characteristics mentioned, foster parents need to have certain emotional characteristics. Married people who are happy in one another and in their children are of course not always capable of taking in another youngster and seeing that he has his own place in the family circle. To be not only consistently just but affectionate enough with the newcomer so that he ceases to feel himself an outsider, yet to avoid stirring any of one's own children to jealousy, may call for finesse as well as good feeling; but experience has proved that for many an emotionally satisfied adult it is not too difficult a task. This same individual needs to be aware of the problem felt, in greater or less degree, by most visiting parents: with freedom from any need for the foster child's devotion must go realization of how desperately (perhaps) the own mother or father needs to retain this devotion. Childless couples or foster parents who are otherwise emotionally frustrated may realize the parent's need more keenly, for the reason that they have felt something akin to it. To them the appeal of the foster child is likely to be far more personal and intense than it is to their emotion-

ally satisfied neighbors While thus peculiarly equipped to realize the visiting parent's need, they may find it harder to preserve the degree of emotional detachment that will be almost essential if they are to keep from arousing jealousy in him or her That many of them succeed in doing so is, however, an established fact <sup>3</sup>

Such capacity for detachment is one phase of an emotional balance which enables its possessor to maintain an even keel through domestic and other vicissitudes, to present essentially the same face, day after day, to any child taken under care and to others who come and go in the home Patience and persistence in keeping the ends of child care steadily in view are other phases, or at least associate themselves in one's mind with the emotionally balanced individual Buoyancy and gayety, an ability to encourage the play life of a child and lead him into "fresh woods and pastures new," while not qualities that can be counted on so uniformly, are gifts of the gods which may compensate for many lacks Ability to keep a house reasonably clean and orderly is of course basic, but the best foster mothers are rarely preeminent as housekeepers, their minds are too occupied with promoting the happiness and welfare of their young charges to permit of concentration upon immaculate perfection in externals

Whether or not she possesses the special gifts of the gods mentioned, it is this constant concern with the well-being and happiness of her charges that marks the true foster mother, and to be able to extend some measure of this concern to visiting parents who need it is a further mark that distinguishes the best of these true mothers

It is only, perhaps, in persons who have known how to ex-

<sup>3</sup> As one experienced worker puts it, where there is no competition among the adults for a child's affection there need be no conflict for the child

tract more than ordinary wisdom from a good many years of living that one should expect to find a sympathetic understanding of troubled parents that equals the concern normally felt for a foster child. Young unmarried mothers torn between love of a baby and fear that they will never be able to care for it properly and hence ought to give it up; other young mothers, safely married but afraid to acknowledge a child born too soon for fear of social condemnation; older parents forced by illness or unemployment to part with loved children—these are visitors (or parents to be visited in hospitals) who most naturally call out the tenderness of deeply maternal foster mothers. Overindulgent, unbalanced, and unloving parents are harder to receive sympathetically. Yet as one learns what lies back of many a hard-visaged man or woman—what histories of bitterly rejected childhood, frustrated youth, betrayed love, fruitless struggle for independence and a right to work, as well as what errors and defects of judgment for which the individual might be held accountable—one may grow less disposed to condemn, more able to see in these faulty men and women mere unhappy children grown up, still bound and limited by early experience.

It is true that as one learns to know some of the wisest and most deeply sympathetic of foster mothers and fathers one is impressed by the fact that early experiences of just as complete unhappiness and frustration may lie behind their present serenely poised adulthood. What are the influences that *have made them what they are, people able to carry more than their weight in the world today instead of people driven to depend on others?* An original endowment with gifts of good ability and of freedom from weaknesses that betray? Sound advice, a sympathetic friend, at some early crossroads? Good luck in one of its myriad forms? Who shall say?

What the ablest and most friendly of foster parents can do for an own parent in trouble is usually little enough in comparison with what he or she needs. Young mothers who need training in the care of a baby are perhaps the outstanding exception, for such mothers sometimes gain from a kindly foster mother almost their full equipment for their future jobs as rearers of the coming generation. In the main, other individuals and agencies will have to be called upon to meet needs for health care, job finding, home reconstruction, and the like, and the foster parents can do little more than give a sympathetic hearing and offer such practical suggestions as experience indicates. Like the rest of us, their capacity to help is severely limited.

In their more intimate associations with their foster children there are also, of course, limits to what they can accomplish. The foster mother who has helped one child out of his difficulties may find herself blocked by the next. Of this, however, she may be sure that every gift she was born with, and every bit of wisdom and self control she has acquired, will count for something in her job of caring for other people's children. No gain from experience, whether bitter or sweet, need be wasted in this undertaking, where an understanding of how human beings live and grow and learn, and fail and give up and try again, furnishes the fundamental basis for useful service.

## PART II

## *"So Many Mamas"*

"I DON'T want to live with anybody but my mother." . . . When Bernard Martek made this announcement, he was expressing a feeling that all small boys are supposed to have. What made the remark arresting was that his mother had been dead for more than a year.

At this time Bernard was going on eight. Approximately half of his short life had been lived in institutions and boarding homes, where his mother had visited him more or less regularly, and any recollections he may have had of a home with her must have been dim. His father he could not possibly remember, as the man had deserted when Bernard was barely a year old.

Bernard had first come to the child-placing agency on transfer from an infant asylum. He was four and a half years old, but so tiny that he hardly looked three. He was an appealing little chap, and his first foster mother, a nurse in a suburban home who undertook to build him up physically, was fond of him from the start. His second foster mother, Mrs. Zigler, together with her husband and four grown children, fell in love with him at sight, and found him, at first, responsive and affectionate. Then his own mother came back to town—she had been working in another city—and began to visit him. Some months later, the foster mother reported that her family was disappointed to find that they could not make Bernard one of them; he held them off, at times seeming actually unfriendly. Later she twice told how he had said to her, "You are not my mother, I don't have to pay any attention to you"—adding on one of these occasions, "I want to go home to live with my own

mother" Bernard spent a year in this home. Before his mother took him away, Mrs. Zigler had come to feel that he would *never fit into the life of her family* because he was always looking forward to going back to a home of his own.

Unfortunately it was not to any home of his own that his mother took him, when she withdrew him from the foster home and the agency's care, but to an institution which had agreed to care for him free of charge. She was in poor health and felt unequal to the strain of keeping up the payments for board with which she had been charged by the public department that committed the child to the agency. But remission of such payments was often granted under like circumstances. Did she also prefer an impersonal setting for him, where no other woman would compete with her for his affection? Nothing of this appears in the record, but such a feeling would surprise no one accustomed to the vagaries of the maternal heart, and the workers who knew Mrs. Martek believed it to be the cause of her action. It is clear enough, at all events, that like many another woman who has lost every thing else she held dear, she clung to this only child of hers with a love that bound him to her until long after she was dead.

While his mother lived, Bernard remained in the institution where she had placed him. Some months after her death he was transferred to another institution, and from there to an adoption bureau which placed him in a boarding home out of town until the right permanent home could be found for him. After he had been in this boarding home for several months a decision was reached not to offer him for adoption, and the child placing agency which had formerly had him under its care was asked to take him on again. A visitor from this agency thereupon went to see him in the out of town



home To her we owe the one striking portrait of him that comes to us from these early years

As known to the agency when he was four and five years old, Bernard had been a gentle little chap, at first almost too good, very appealing to adults with a weakness for babies Except for delicate health and his unreadiness to become one of his foster family, he had presented no problems worth mentioning Now, at seven and a half, he is still pale and small and weak, to the visitor he seems a "washed out, negative personality" He has, however, made for himself a brand new reputation, and bursts upon our vision as a full-blown "problem child" He has been playing hooky, short-changing the foster mother when sent on errands, purloining and hiding fruit Recently he had lit a candle in the barn and denied having done it On the morning of the day the visitor called he had taken a five dollar bill from the foster mother's purse and apparently lost it His school report read "Scholarship fair, behavior bad" While the visitor was there, he brought home what purported to be a note from his teacher, written in a childish hand on a small square of paper, which read, "Bernard is a good boy" This he readily confessed he had written himself

By this assortment of iniquities the foster parents, a middle aged couple, were completely nonplussed and a good deal worried They feared the boy's sly ways and lying would bring disgrace upon them, and rather than have this happen *would give him up, though they declared they were quite attached to him* They considered him bright, but feared that he "would never be any good"

As Bernard had, on another occasion, succeeded in finding a quarter which he had "lost" (digging it up beside a telegraph pole), he was on this day sent out to look for the five-

dollar bill. He returned without it, appearing "not much concerned." He was "unresponsive," the visitor reported, "to both harsh and gentle talk"; his eyes remained downcast and he would not look the worker in the face. He "could give no reason for taking the money," "could think of nothing he wanted to buy." His attitude, she felt, was "uncanny." When asked whether he would like to leave the foster home he said no; "otherwise nothing seemed to make an impression."

In the foster home, besides the middle-aged parents, there lived a young married son who ran a store in the neighborhood, with his wife and child. Bernard confirmed the foster parents' statement that he was particularly fond of this young man, who (his parents said) "would do anything for Bernard." The boy was said to get on well with the baby. Temporarily in the home, also, were an older pair of grandchildren who had recently returned from Europe—colorful youngsters who were quite the center of interest. Bernard's outburst of misbehavior, the worker felt, was probably a bid for attention in a situation where he was without roots and felt himself much outclassed. That his fundamental insecurity was at least partly responsible for his misdeeds could hardly be doubted by anyone accustomed to interpret behavior from a mental hygiene standpoint.

Shortly after this revealing visit the foster parents gave Bernard up and he was returned to the child-placing agency. It was on the day of his return that he made the observation with which this story opens.

The experienced workers of the agency realized that what this lonely, relationless boy needed was a real home with other children and parents big-hearted enough to give him a share of parental love; but they also realized that in his present state he was not emotionally prepared to participate in

the life of such a home, and would be likely to reproduce in it the pattern of behavior he had recently evolved. To fit him for such participation, he had need of an interlude of peace and freedom from competition, a free, frictionless existence in which the affectionate interest of an adult could be as much taken for granted as the sunshine, while no emotional demands would be made upon him in return; in which physical upbuilding and mental (or, if you choose, moral) recuperation could proceed together. Happily, the agency had at its disposal a country home which offered just such conditions and was much used for unhappy youngsters who needed to learn to share affection with other children before they were ready for family life.

There, under the wing of Aunt Sally Lutz, with several other small boys, Bernard spent five uneventful months. Just why life jogged along so peacefully at Brookside Cottage, without any of the competitive drives that so often interfere with a child's happy development, is hard to say. A minimum of restriction and a maximum of outdoor play, freedom from pressure of all sorts, the benign influence of a person who knew how to live a day at a time in unhurried, unworrying simplicity—these were perhaps some of the ingredients of the situation.

During these five months there was never any question of Bernard's stealing; indeed, he presented no behavior problems of any importance. He went to the district school regularly and got along well with other children. He never spoke of his own mother; how much he thought about her there was no way of knowing. He grew very fond of Aunt Sally—so much so that when, in the spring, he overheard some talk about another boy's staying on at the cottage, he spoke up, saying he'd like to stay too and be Aunt Sally's

boy To accede to his wish was out of the question, as no children remained permanently in this home. Would removal from it, after such an attachment had been formed, prove upsetting? In Bernard's case, as in others, it did not prove so Just how Aunt Sally contrived to interest the child in the home to which he was next to go is not recorded, but on the day appointed Bernard arrived at the big central station in the city with a jar of jam which he had brought from the farm as a gift to his new auntie, and showed an eager interest in going to his new home

The visitor who met him, to whom he was already known, was astonished at the change in the child, he had grown taller and stockier and was so brown He greeted her, and at once informed her that he had twenty-one cents and wanted to buy something Perhaps, she hazarded, something for his new auntie? He seized upon the suggestion with zest, and when they arrived at the Hyman home was carrying a red carnation in one hand and the jar of jam in the other.

The Hymans were people of slight education but good understanding, very warm hearted and simple. The father was a carpenter, there were several working children, and one little girl four years younger than Bernard The parents had been accustomed to manage their own children by talking things over quietly with them, they were a gentle, loving family group, orthodox from habit, with no particular educational drives or ambitions The idea of boarding a child had appealed to them largely because of the additional income it would mean, but their sympathies had been stirred by the account of the motherless little boy who was coming to them and they welcomed him with much feeling His carnation was set in the middle of the table which had been spread for the Sabbath evening meal, one of his foster brothers showed

him the shelf where he was to keep his books and school supplies, Mr. Hyman had him try on his new suit to be sure it fitted, and he was made to feel that the family anticipated an added joy from his presence at their Sabbath services. Little Thalia, his new sister, stood by with a look of awe on her face while the family fussed over him.

Seven years have been added to Bernard's eight since he was received into the bosom of the Hyman family. He is now a boy of fifteen, who is attending high school and studying music.

During these years the most serious problem that he has presented to his elders has been that of building him up and keeping him built up physically. At first his foster mother appealed often to the visitor for advice on diet and food habits. The doctors laid down rules as to rest and bed-time, prescribed maltine and cod liver oil, milk, an enriched dietary, and so forth. His teeth and his eyes were examined and treated. The child was sent back to Brookside Cottage or to camp for a few weeks in the summer. Gradually, though with numerous setbacks, his physical condition improved.

As regards Bernard's behavior, it is hard to believe that any boy could have fewer complaints made against him in the course of seven years. The fault oftenest mentioned was that he was hard on his clothes—very hard—and that wherever there was dirt, he was in it. He was also a light, irregular eater. Once his foster mother found he had thrown his roll out of the window to avoid finishing his breakfast, so that he could get off to school quicker. Several times she speaks of difficulties in getting him to come in on time to meals. Once the visitor talks to him about his staying out in the park and skipping meals altogether. She learns that he

has been doing this to avoid having to entertain little Thalia, whose devotion to him becomes at times a good deal of a burden. However, on the many occasions when he is seen with the child he plays with her sweetly and patiently. . . . One year he has some difficulty at school—his teacher says he runs around, talks, pays no attention to her, draws, squirms in his seat, and so on. He is induced to tell her he is sorry, feels better, and no more is heard about the matter. . . . Many times the foster mother speaks of what a fine boy he is, or refers to specific traits—he is sensitive, bright, truthful, obedient.

The seven years have not all been spent by Bernard in one home. Before he had been two years with the Hymans, Mrs. Hyman died, after a brief illness. The visitor at once called for Bernard, wishing to relieve the family and to spare him as much of an unhappy experience as possible. He had ceased crying when she arrived, but was evidently feeling very lost. On the way to the office he was talkative and seemed cheerful; but after she had left him alone for a little while, to amuse himself with books and blocks, she found him silently weeping.

He is placed in a temporary home while various possibilities are being considered for him. One is a home with Mrs. Hyman's sister-in-law. This presents many of the same qualities as the Hymans'—gentleness and understanding on the part of the parents, strong family ties, a warm, friendly atmosphere. Bernard already knows the family, is on friendly terms with them all; they would be glad to have him one of them, though Mrs. Hartig is careful to refrain from actively seeking his placement, knowing that there are many points

to be considered when a child is moved. What then made the agency hesitate?

Two reasons appear. First, in the Hyman home Bernard had occupied the position of youngest son, though not youngest child, and, it was felt, had thus been to a degree a center of interest. In the Hartig family, besides an older daughter, there were three boys, the youngest a year or two younger than Bernard. Would this mean for him a loss—a serious deprivation? . . . Second, the Hartigs had certain educational ambitions for their children which would probably be beyond the capacity of Bernard to meet.

These points were finally talked over frankly with Mrs. Hartig. She realized that there might have been certain satisfactions for Bernard in being youngest son, but did not feel that he would lack satisfactions in her home. Six-year-old Danny was not considered a baby or treated like one, she explained; all her children were encouraged to be independent, to grow up. As to the educational issue, she was intelligent in discussing individual differences and the harm that might be done by superimposing ambitions on a child. Bernard was placed with her, and her judgment proved correct. Soon he was one of a troop of happy, active youngsters and especially fond of his next older foster brother. Never does the least *sign of jealousy, of competitive striving for attention, appear.*

Is some closer analysis of the qualities of these two homes possible? What traits or characteristics, what methods, enabled the two families to amalgamate Bernard with themselves, to draw this lonely little fragment of a family so close that he lost sight of himself as a separate entity?

There is nothing striking or surprising in the picture the record permits one to build up of either family.

Mr and Mrs Hyman, the visitor notes, are "still in love with one another" It is a familiar idea that love between parents not only holds a home together but is an encouragement to normal emotional development in their own children Why not, then, in a foster child?

The foster mother is gentle, explains things quietly, is never harsh, does not try to force issues (as the eating of foods Bernard dislikes, instead she tries to vary the diet and gives him all the fruit he wants)

She, however, is much concerned about his eating habits When the visitor tells her not to worry, and tries to put responsibility up to Bernard, she says "I must worry, he is my boy" (One does not recommend worry in itself, but as an evidence that she thinks of the boy as her own, it has its value)

The foster mother is generous She gives Bernard his penny a day, or his apple—sometimes both—and an extra five cents once in a while when he asks for it, saying, "He must have things"

She is appreciative of the boy's good points, speaks often of his being sweet, obedient, a fine boy, and her face lights up when she refers to him Both foster parents are proud of him when he does well, as in Hebrew school and in music, and concerned when he brings home a poor report card—but not to the extent of nagging him about it

When they plan to move, to combine forces with a widowed friend, they assume that Bernard will go with them

All their relatives and friends accept him as one of the family, he visits them, they make him small gifts

In the Hartig home the companionship of boys near his own age appears to have special values for Bernard, who



grows more alert and spirited as he becomes one of the group. The youngsters in this family are always busy and happy; again and again the visitor finds them absorbed in the fascinating task of turning worthless objects into playthings—cowboy belts, Indian head-dresses, or the like. Mrs. Hartig never interferes with activities which afford them pleasure, and gives them every opportunity to exercise their ingenuity in such ways. She is of a cheerful, easy-going disposition, and "does her best by her children without taking life too seriously." She never shows partiality—all the boys are rewarded and punished alike. The whole family is proud of Bernard's musical gifts and pleased when lessons are arranged for him. As there is no indication that he possesses remarkable talent, the visitor tries to influence the group to think of the boy's musical interests as a hobby, an avocation rather than a vocation, and the foster mother helps keep this point of view in the foreground.

Following the story of Bernard Martek's life in the two homes where he has lived since he was eight is an experience which makes one realize how seldom one has the opportunity to read about normal family life. In the daily press and in fiction alike it is the abnormal, the freakish and exceptional in human relations, that is constantly played up, until one almost inevitably falls into thinking and speaking in certain clichés regarding the characteristics of the family in "these times." Then one stumbles upon families like the Hymans and the Hartigs who, in the midst of an ordinary crowded tenement district in a big city, with every sort of distracting and disintegrating influence playing upon them, go quietly along providing their children with much the same opportunities for free play and free development that country

children in far better circumstances have been wont to enjoy. So far, neither family seems to have found the control of its young any particular problem. The split between the generations, even, seems minimal—the elders being respected quite as though they were masters of impeccable English and completely assimilated to the American scene.

One is equally impressed with the normality of Bernard himself. During the whole second half of his fifteen years there has been not a single outbreak of any kind that marks him as in any way an exceptional child. One remembers, however, the series of episodes which occurred when he was seven, before he had begun to find anchorage in the strange seas through which he had been drifting. If fate had compelled him to remain in the household which he had so upset by his childish misdoings, or had transferred him to others where he was no better understood, who knows to what lengths the tendencies there manifested might have led him? We know how hard to live down is a bad reputation once established in home, school, and neighborhood, even for a normal youngster.

Digging around a transplanted child to see how well his roots are taking hold is naturally not a practice indulged in by competent workers. When an uprooting becomes necessary, however, one notes with keen interest any signs indicative of stability or instability. After Mrs. Hyman's death, when Bernard was on his way to the office with the visitor, he surprised her by his composure. He had been telling her that he called Mrs. Hyman's relatives uncles and aunts, and followed this by the question, Had *he* any aunts or uncles? The visitor explained that very often families had an only child, and so this child's children had no uncles and aunts. He listened, then commented rather dejectedly, "No one to

visit." Except for quiet tears when he was left alone, he bore his uprooting with equanimity.

The chief test of Bernard's good adjustment at this time, however, was his behavior in the temporary home where he spent a few weeks before going to the Hartigs. The foster mother here found him "a charming youngster, obedient, clean, and pleasant." Nothing occurred to mar her first happy impression, and the two grew fond of one another. When he was on his way to the Hartigs with the visitor, Bernard remarked that he had "so many mammas" nobody would know to which one he referred.

The smoothness of both these transitions from home to home, the excellent poise shown by this ten-year-old boy, is evidence, of course, not only of the stability acquired by him in two years of normal home life, but of the confidence he had come to feel in his visitor and in the organization she represents. Though the worker makes a point of taking a friendly interest in his foster brothers and sisters as well as in him, helping this one in his search for a job or a chance to take drawing lessons, including another in an invitation to a picnic or a show, Bernard knows she is coming primarily to see him and learns to count on her as a friend. She puts him in touch with libraries and a club, arranges occasional special treats for him, visits the school when he is in disfavor there and helps him find a way out, arranges for physical examinations and medical care, for vacations and new clothes, "rebukes him roundly" when he is inconsiderate of his foster mother, is ready at all times to listen to him and answer his questions. She listens to his foster mother, too, praises her when she shows wisdom in handling the boy, encourages her when she appears troubled about him. While the agency's greatest service is to place him in a home where he can feel

he belongs, indispensable also is its steady watchfulness, its encouragement of every helpful attitude and activity in boy and foster family alike, its readiness to step in and assume responsibility if disaster threatens

One complication in Bernard's life has not been referred to. Throughout his earlier years in the Hyman and Hartig homes one old friend of his mother's occasionally visited him, bringing him small gifts or money for the movies, and on one occasion inviting him to her home. In the beginning she was strongly prejudiced against foster homes and wanted him sent to an institution, but as she was tactfully entertained by Bernard's foster mothers and observed his improvement, these attitudes disappeared. In conversation at the agency's office she once revealed what seemed to be the basis of her continued attentions to the child. In former years Bernard's parents had lived in her house. The child's mother, deserted and ill, had not always been able to pay her rent, and once, in impatience, Mrs. Sossnitz had turned her away. Though this episode had not meant a final break between the two women, it had left Mrs. Sossnitz, after her friend's death, with a sense of guilt which she sought to assuage by constituting herself a living reminder to Bernard of his mother.

For a child in a foster home who is without relatives, there is obvious value in the interest of a family friend. Among the ingredients in Mrs. Sossnitz' drive to befriend Bernard, however, her sense of guilt and effort to compensate for it was so preponderant that her attentions brought little happiness. Her insistence in dragging the boy's thoughts back to a past that had held so much sorrow for him seemed, to those who observed the two, to be more pain provoking than satisfaction giving, and while not frequent enough to interfere seriously with his adjustment in the present, her visits seemed of

dubious value to the growing child. Youngsters who have lost their parents often—perhaps usually—seek contact, sooner or later, with relatives or friends who can revive memories and tell them tales of the past. Gratification of such desires is recognized as a right of the young adult, and is commonly granted even to children of Bernard's age, but forcing a child to remember is quite another matter. There was no legal way of preventing Mrs. Sossnitz' visits or of regulating what she said during them—though once she was persuaded to refrain from mentioning a potentially painful topic. In so far as such visits bring to any child a widening of friendly contacts and wholesome, forward-looking activities, they are of course to be welcomed.

The extent of Bernard's absorption into the Hartig family is evidenced by two paragraphs from a letter written to the agency visitor by the foster father after the boy had been for not quite two years in the home.

In order to teach and develop our children we must first learn to understand them. My wife and I have entered into the childish world, that is we make an attempt to think in their terms and live in their atmosphere, answer their questions with utter seriousness and interest ourselves with their problems. I believe, Miss Pavlov, that you have witnessed how far we have extended freedom to our children and thus have won their trust and confidence. Bernard has learned to share his joys and sorrows with us and we reciprocate.

I want to relate an incident to you that will convince you of the effect that we are having on Bernard. One day Bernard and Rachel were in the library and they began to discuss whether or not they were considered brother and sister. They decided to prove it by my wife. Upon their return from the library Bernard immediately ran to my wife and asked her whether or not he was her son. My wife, of course, replied in the affirmative. Bernard then embraced her and said that she was his mother and that hereafter he will call himself Bernard Hartig.

## *A Boy Who Worried*

Two years ago a little group of social workers met in the office of a child placing agency to discuss plans for Steven Cooley. On the desk lay a letter from an orphan asylum asking them to find a foster home for the boy, and a copy of the history gathered by a child guidance clinic which had examined him a few months before and recommended foster home care.

"It seems evident," the case supervisor remarked, "that inadequate as the history is, it is all we can hope for—no use going over the ground the clinic has just covered. I take it we have all read the history and have the main facts in mind, but it may be as well to run over them again. First came those fifteen months in the Maternity Home with his mother, about which we are told practically nothing except that she seemed fond of him and that he developed normally. Then the mother takes a job and he is placed in a foster home—about which the Home can tell nothing, not even the foster mother's name or the name of the agency that placed him! (It seems almost unbelievable, but apparently no record whatever was kept of the placement.) Nine months later, when two years old, he is returned to the Home as 'unmanageable.' He is in a 'frightful condition,' the matron says—undernourished, cringes like a frightened animal expecting to be struck, can hardly be induced to eat, cowers in a corner of his crib. (Must we suppose that he was never visited in the foster home during those nine months?) The Home keeps him for a couple of months, while it tries with the aid of his godmother, Miss Hughes, to plan for him. Word comes during this period of his mother's death, so they hand him over

to an adoption bureau. The bureau places him temporarily in a boarding home, which returns him in three weeks, whereupon back he goes to the Maternity Home with a report that reads: 'The most impossible child we've ever had . . . kicks, screams, bites . . . has unpleasant and dirty habits . . . unmanageable.' Finally he is placed by Miss Hughes in a Church Home for small children. She pays his board—has done so ever since and expects to continue to do so.

"In the Church Home he behaves at first much as he did when first returned to the Maternity Home: can hardly be persuaded to eat, shrieks and runs from the worker who tries to undress him, and when she attempts to bathe him yells that she has put ice-water in the tub. Apparently they are sorry for him and kind to him and favor him in various ways—as in letting him sleep in the room with one of the workers and eat at the adults' table. During the next five years they succeed in building him up physically, though it is almost impossible to get him to exercise in the gym; but he doesn't learn to play with children of his age, and the report sounds as though he were babied and given in to a good deal. When he is seven, because he has passed the age limit of the Home, he is transferred to the Oakdale Orphan Asylum.

"Here he is in a cottage with nineteen other boys, and doesn't get on with them at all. He plays only with much smaller children—knows nothing about boys' games and is so afraid of getting hurt that he doesn't dare try (for instance) to roller-skate. If one of the fellows hits him he never defends himself but cries and runs into the house. Also he tags the housemother and demands all sorts of extra attentions from her and the other institution workers. The boys despise him, of course—one of the institution workers says she has never known a child to be 'the object of such

concentrated hatred'; and the housemother takes such a dislike to him that for a time they transfer him to the hospital. (She called him 'crazy' and insisted that the only way to handle him was by spanking.) Though his intelligence is normal, he is doing next to nothing in school except cut up—his teacher says he's the worst problem she has ever had. (However, I note that this teacher is young and appears to have poor control of her classes.) He reads a little and he seems to want to help her, but he has such poor coordination that his attempts to help usually end in spoiling something. Finally the institution has him studied at the child guidance clinic.

"The clinic lists his problems as 'disobedience, temper tantrums and screaming, hyperactivity, fears, especially of physical pain and of corporal punishment.' It finds (to mention the main points in the physical examination) that he is of normal size for his age, fairly well developed and nourished, fair posture, flat feet, tonsils diseased and needing removal; there is no pathology of the central nervous system but various signs point to early rickets and a fatigue cycle. . . . The psychologist reports that he has low average intelligence and no special abilities or disabilities. . . . The psychiatrist (a woman) brings out a number of interesting points: Steven's devotion to a little boy of five named Frankie, at the institution, whom he has 'adopted' and calls his 'brother'; his talk of being 'fussed over' when he was in the hospital and how much he liked it; his fear of hurting himself, his calling another boy a 'sissy'; his strong preference for men, because 'women aren't fair' and 'if they get angry they hit you hard and they don't mind where they hit you.' She is impressed by his 'fears of people and punishment,' which 'might be traced to a nine-month period in a



boarding home from which he returned in a badly frightened state' On the other hand, he was evidently under an 'extremely protective' regime during the five years he spent at the Church Home—was so sheltered there that he had no chance to 'grow emotionally,' so that he 'continues to look to adults for help and security, and is unable to meet children of his own age on an equal footing' Somehow he has 'built up an ideal picture of men as persons who are kind, fair, and generous' (there are some young men on the staff of the institution, of course) but there is, in his attitude toward them, none of the 'boyish identification with a male person' which one expects of a seven year old, rather, he looks to men for the 'same type of affection and attention that a child would expect from a mother' The report concludes with these recommendations 'It is obvious that a child so deprived, so insecure, and so undeveloped emotionally, is not well placed in a large, impersonal institution A foster home under adequate supervision such as the Child Welfare Agency would give is the recommendation of the group A carefully chosen, well-prepared home in which there are no children and where the parents are fairly young people able to give Steven much affection and attention would be considered the best type of home for him This is felt to be so, since this, it might be hoped, would give him enough security to enable him to meet children adequately later on It is to be emphasized that this should not be a trial placement but one that gives promise of being permanent' "

The supervisor finished reading from the clinic history and laid it on her desk "Have I given a fair résumé? Anything important omitted? Shall we take up possible homes?"

"About his attitude toward men"—Miss Ames, one of the agency's visitors, was speaking—"don't you suppose Dr

Quackenbush was largely responsible for it? We aren't told how he came to take an interest in Steven, but he had the child at his home for several visits, during the five years at the Church Home—studied him, gave him some treatment for a nervous condition (luminol is mentioned) and is quoted as saying the child has a neurosis—also that it took the entire time of one person to care for him! It appears that Dr Quackenbush made (how long ago isn't clear) the same recommendation—foster home care instead of an institution—that the clinic now makes, but in spite of it, Steven was transferred to a larger institution. I imagine the Church Home thought, after the two disastrous experiences in foster homes, that no foster parents would tolerate Steven. All the same, bad as the child's tantrums are, they don't sound any worse than some others we've known. He's terribly restless, and makes trouble in school, but so do others—and at least he has average intelligence and no organic nervous troubles. Normal physically, except for tonsils and teeth.

His fearfulness does seem excessive, and his inability to get on with other children is serious of course. But it's such a clear case of needing to be mothered—needing somebody who can give him love and understanding with firmness. Have you thought that Mrs Yost might fill the bill, Miss Hart?"

The third member of the group nodded. "She would be excellent, of course, I've no doubt she could handle the child wisely and her patience is almost limitless. But her husband's position is uncertain, and if he should lose his job, and they should have to move away, or should be forced onto home relief, it would mean upsetting Steven again. If it weren't for the depression I'd say yes."

The supervisor spoke again. "I agree—it's too risky for a

child who needs to have a chance to put his roots down as Steven does. Then too, the school over there is uncooperative, and Steven is likely to be a school problem. I've been thinking about a new home we've just accepted, the Clement Guthries'. Sounds stable financially—foster mother decidedly promising—they'd like a child without parents and might possibly, if they grew attached to him, consider adoption. You've visited them, Miss Hart. Will you tell us about them?"

Miss Hart began: "Mrs. Guthrie was a professional singer—soloist in a choir, toured in a quartet for a time until she more or less lost her voice. Mr. Guthrie is an expert in electrical wiring, has steady work with fair pay. They never had any children of their own, but have boarded a few privately, of late. When younger, they never felt they could afford children on account of the old people—three parents between them to look out for; now feel they are too old to begin to rear a family—Mrs. Guthrie is in the late thirties, Mr. Guthrie nearing fifty. Mrs. Guthrie had a happy childhood, apparently, and a good home background. She was practically an only child, as two sisters died young. She talks freely of father and mother, courtship, work experiences—seems to have had a lot of wholesome satisfactions all along the line, and apparently has an unusually good understanding of children. They both enjoy swimming and dancing and jogging around in their Ford on picnics. Have out-of-work friends for visits, neighbors' children in and out (though the Guthries have only lived in the neighborhood about a month), half a dozen pets, more or less—mostly strays or left with them by former guests. Mrs. Guthrie is said to be a good cook, understands food values and takes pains to prepare appetizing meals; a fair housekeeper but not a fussy

one—couldn't be, with those dogs and cats all over the place! Sounds like an astute, stable person, not easily upset by a nervous child. She's attractive looking—warm brown eyes that dance with vitality. Mr Guthrie had less education, very frank about that, tells how he told his wife to check him up on social blunders, when he first began taking her out. Long and lean, jovial, friendly—as anxious as she is to have a child. His mechanical skill should be an asset, with a boy.”

“Sounds hopeful, certainly,” commented Miss Ames. “I wonder if there might be too much hospitality? Might a child like Steven resent having the foster parents do so much for other children? I've read the record and I noticed that they were taking carloads of youngsters to the beach, for instance. And does any one know how Steven feels toward animals? May be afraid of dogs. Another thing since the child talks about women being mean and men so much fairer, suppose he shows a strong preference for Mr Guthrie? How would an attitude like that affect Mrs Guthrie?”

“Those are points to keep in mind, certainly. If you could go out Saturday, Miss Ames, and tell them about Steven, get some idea of how they would react to his special difficulties.

He's an attractive youngster, I gather, and should appeal to people who have such a feeling for cast off animals.”<sup>1</sup>

He did. Mrs Guthrie was not in the least alarmed by anything Miss Ames had to tell her. Temper tantrums?—she described one a little girl she used to care for had indulged in. Fears?—this child was full of them, had seen her

<sup>1</sup> To this point the discussion of the case presented is put into the mouths of an imaginary group of workers; but the recorded facts are closely adhered to.

mother die and heard her father rehearse the death scene for days after, till it seemed as though she never would get over her fright and be able to endure the dark or being left alone. Sex problems? (not that Steven was known to have any, but just in case any should crop up): she had dealt with perverse habits in the small son of a friend—habits acquired from an older boy and passed on to a smaller girl, altogether a fairly complicated social situation—sensibly, and without being much disturbed. When it was suggested that Steven might show a strong preference for her husband, she thought that would be natural. She would wait for him to grow fond of her.

She did not have long to wait. Steven was placed with her late in August. He had been told the Guthries were expecting him for a visit—just so that if things didn't turn out as hoped the way of retreat would be open. He had cowered a bit, as he and the visitor approached the house; but by the time both foster parents had given him a cordial welcome, and Mrs. Guthrie had shown him his room—all-to-himself—prepared with so much care that Mr. Guthrie said, "You would think the King was coming!"—and he had consumed a glass of milk with cookies and been introduced to the dogs and cats—all of which took only a few minutes—he was looking cheerful enough so that Miss Ames felt it wise to withdraw and leave the newly constituted family to themselves to get acquainted.

She did not dig up the seed to see how it was sprouting for two whole weeks. Then—

As Miss Ames' car drew up at the curb, Steven, who was playing in the yard with a group of children, came running, and seemed delighted to see her. "I knew you'd be out to-day!" he asserted. "I told Aunt Nell so." He escorted the

visitor into the house and would have settled down to join in the conversation had not Miss Ames asked him to keep an eye on the car—she didn't want any of the children to turn the engine off because she wouldn't be able to start it again. He accepted this suggestion readily, and his elders had the desired chance to talk things over.

Everything had been going beautifully. Steven's first words, after Miss Ames' departure, had been about his godmother; he was sure she would be out to see him soon. Mrs. Guthrie had agreed. This godmother, Miss Hughes, had always paid his expenses in his various homes, but had never been a frequent visitor, and his introduction of her personality at his first contact with the new home was apparently a gesture by which the lonely little chap sought to establish himself as having someone who belonged to him. He had also talked of Miss Ames, wondering when she would be out to see him, and had exhibited a book she had given him. He had spoken of his mother, too, saying how much he wished he could remember her, but she had died when he was a baby. He had taken to Mr. Guthrie at once, as it had been anticipated he would, and for a day or two had hardly seemed to notice Mrs. Guthrie; then he began to show affection for her and was soon telling her she was "the nicest person he knew." He called her "Aunt Nell" most of the time, occasionally "mamma" since the other children spoke of her as his mother.

After his second day in the home Steven had come in and announced that he'd been talking with the boy next door: "He says there's a good school here." Mrs. Guthrie agreed there was. "Then," said Steven, "if you don't mind I think I'd like to stay here and go to school." Mrs. Guthrie assured

him that she would like to have him stay, and he seemed delighted.

As they talked on, it was obvious that both foster parents were already fond of the child. Scarcely a negative note marred the happiness of this first report of theirs to the visitor. To be sure, Steve had been disobedient at first—but there was a definite improvement already, and Mrs. Guthrie was confident she could cope not only with this situation but with the child's underlying problems and need to feel secure. Yes, he had seemed quite fearful at first—wouldn't stay in a room by himself, even in broad daylight; didn't want to go away from the house, would sit on the doorstep in the evening while the other children played tag; but that was over, he now played with the others even after dark. They seemed to have accepted him well—if he had his quarrels, like the rest, Mrs. Guthrie never interfered. She had noticed that he seemed never to resent insults—as when a boy threw dirt in his face; also he never tattled. She agreed with Miss Ames that she might gradually instil into him the idea that he should fight back and not accept insults.

At home, Steve seemed anxious to please the foster parents. He loved all the animals and had begged Uncle Clem to add a goat to the menagerie! He ate well and declared Aunt Nell was "the best cook." He had asked Uncle Clem if *he* could cook too, and when he said yes, had suggested that he get the meals part of the time so Aunt Nell wouldn't have to work so hard. Mr. Guthrie, telling this with a laugh, said he supposed he'd be cooking soon. . . . Steven had begun to kiss Aunt Nell good night of his own accord, she having carefully refrained from caresses till he showed a desire for them. He had a great habit of asking "Why?" even continu-

ing after an explanation had been given him. The whole family—which at this time included a young man guest—had begun singing a popular song called “Why?” whenever he did this, and soon Steve was singing it himself, and was using the word less frequently.

The saying “Every beginning is hard,” with its cheerful implication that things grow easier as one goes on, does not always apply in foster home placements. Not if the child has a really deep-seated problem.

During the three months of that fall, difficulties kept cropping up. Before September was over, the school was making bitter complaints of Steven’s behavior. Mrs. Guthrie visited and blithely reported to Miss Ames that the principal was an old maid wedded to her school, and that she—Mrs. Guthrie—had been much put to it to refrain from laughing when Steven’s iniquities were listed for her, as: he came too early; his skin showed between his pants and his shirt; he was excessively restless, didn’t pay attention, was constantly disrupting the class, and did not enter into the games; he was too attentive to the girls—threw kisses to them, pinched them, blew down their necks. To Miss Ames, when she visited the school, similar complaints were made; also the principal declared that she had never known a child who asked so many questions, and that neither she nor the teacher considered Steven “normal.” This led to some discussion of *normality versus abnormality*. Miss Ames told what a deprived life Steven’s had been, how he had never had a real home till he came to the Guthries’, and how marvellously he had improved since he had been there. He was normal physically, normal mentally, and (so far as was known) normal emotionally, she pointed out. If the prin-



principal considered a child abnormal because his behavior differed from that of children who had not been deprived as he had, then she might agree that by that definition he was abnormal. The principal wanted Steven to be removed from her school, but no other was available, and Miss Ames pointed out that he had to be in public school somewhere. She and Mrs. Guthrie talked of the possibility of finding a progressive school, but apparently there was none in the community.

By this time Steve was not getting on so well with the youngsters in the neighborhood as he had seemed to do at first; he had been snubbed particularly by the boy next door. Mrs. Guthrie was trying to make him feel that he was as good as any of them and that he should fight back when hit, but he was so used to such treatment that it was hard to get him to show any resentment. If even a smaller child than he raised a threatening hand at him he would crouch down with arm lifted to avert the blow. He referred often to beatings he had received—at the orphanage, at school, in some unidentifiable earlier place of residence (not the Church Home, where everybody had been good to him, he always said). . . . It was hard to get him to mind, too; the foster mother had sent him to bed one night with only a glass of milk for supper because he had disregarded her prohibition against walking on a certain highway where several children had been killed; but he had gone there again a few days later. He obeyed Mr. Guthrie, and seemed to fear his displeasure, though why he should when the foster father had never whipped him, Mrs. Guthrie didn't know. . . . In various ways, particularly in manners, the child had improved, and he was getting along well in the home. He followed the foster mother round a great deal, got in her way, wanted to

help her with everything in the kitchen, but she didn't mind. The visitor felt that Mrs. Guthrie did not expect too much of her eight-year-old and was not easily discouraged.

This opinion must have been confirmed on the next visit, in October.

Both foster parents expressed enthusiasm, on this occasion, about Steven's improvement. There had been no recent complaints from the school, indeed, the boy had brought home some papers with stars on them. Mr. Guthrie said that he had to be pretty strict with Steve or the youngster would "run right over him." It also appeared that Mrs. Guthrie was quite stern on occasion, but she was extremely affectionate, and Steve was much attached to her and quoted his Aunt Nell to everyone. . . . After her husband had gone out, the foster mother confided to the visitor what she had kept from him: that Steve had short-changed her when sent on an errand, asserting that he had not received back ten cents which it was later found he had spent for bubble gum. The next day Mrs. Guthrie had talked to Steve about this, telling him how badly she felt that he would steal money from her and even lie about it. She told him she could not like him if he was going to behave like this, and reminded him that she had always tried to get him the things he wanted and to do nice things for him. For several days she talked with him only when necessary and showed him no affection. Finally he put his arms around her and asked her if she would like him again if he never did anything like that any more. She assured him that she would, and ever since they had been most friendly and affectionate.

In November complaints from the school piled up again: numerous notes had been sent home by Steve which he had

failed to deliver. Meeting a teacher by chance, Mrs. Guthrie learned that for ten days he had been kept in the principal's office for misbehavior, though nothing new or startling was reported of him. He had been a little more difficult at home, too. The foster mother visited the classroom and arranged to keep in close touch with the teacher through reports sent on certain definite days, and appeared to be doing all that an intelligent mother could do to handle the situation.

Relations between Steve and the neighborhood also grew worse during this month, though the fact was not recorded till the next, when the Guthries moved, and all sorts of difficulties were reported to have cleared up.

For one thing, Steven, acting against the advice of Mrs. Guthrie, had mentioned in the first neighborhood the fact that he came from an institution; and as a consequence the boys, especially one big bully, had "picked on him." In the new neighborhood no one knew this damning fact and the children had "taken Steve right in." The boys were coming over and whistling for him to come out—"a sure sign," said Mrs. Guthrie, "that they like him." Steve had "just blossomed," she declared—was so proud of being wanted that he held his head up, whistled and sang, and seemed to have new courage.

Then the school was so different! Mrs. Guthrie liked the principal and Steve's teacher. Steve, it now appeared, had once gone so far as to threaten his former teacher with a knife, so it was just as well that the furnace broke down and forced them to move!—And they were nearer the church than formerly, and Steve, who had been going to Sunday school and enjoying it right along, was being asked to join the choir. Mrs. Guthrie told of an instance of "moral cour-

age" in the boy he had kept back some money from his Sunday school envelope, and when she found it out and proposed that he take it back himself, he did so, explaining to the teacher what he had done

It came out at this time that Steve was very anxious to change his name to Guthrie, he hated the name Cooley, couldn't imagine how he got it, and of course as long as his name was different, people knew he didn't belong to the Guthries Mrs Guthrie had said she thought Cooley a rather pretty name, but outside of school he might call himself what he liked The point was not, of course, so easily settled, and kept coming up Steven had been talking, it seemed, about his own mother His ambition was to save enough money to buy her a tombstone He liked to pretend that he remembered living at home On Thanksgiving he was delighted with the dinner and remarked to Mrs. Guthrie that when he was at home with his mother and father, they always had turkey for Thanksgiving She replied, "Of course every mother and father have Thanksgiving dinners for their children" Whenever he questioned having been placed in institutions, she explained that since his mother and father were dead there was nothing else to be done with him, that if they had lived they would have cared for him just as others do This seemed to give him confidence He continued to talk of Frankie and the institution, but did not want to go back

This first visit to the new home was made by a visitor who had not before met the Guthries or Steven She was impressed by Mrs Guthrie's warmth of personality, her enthusiasm, and her real affection and interest She felt that the foster mother was proud of what she had done for Steven and both wanted and needed a great deal of praise Of this

she gave liberally. Only one negative point is noted: Mrs. Guthrie had threatened to return Steve to the agency if he did not behave in school. Since he seemed quite happy and free, the visitor felt that perhaps the foster mother's way of making this threat had kept it from being too harmful. As a newcomer on the scene, she moved carefully, refraining from criticism and pressure. Thus she brought up the question of dental work needed by Steven, but when Mrs. Guthrie thought it better to wait a while longer because he was still so fearful, did not urge the point.

Social workers are so used to human beings' not staying put, that the downs and ups of the rest of that school year were met by the visitor to the Guthrie home with equanimity. For, alas, few of the gains recorded in December held through the year that followed. Relations with the neighborhood children reverted to the pattern so long characteristic of Steven: he was put out of a club of youngsters into which he had been received with enthusiasm, and all along the line the old familiar difficulties cropped up. In school the cooperative and attractive new teacher and principal proceeded to have much the same difficulties with Steven as had their predecessors, though they showed far more ingenuity and good humor in dealing with them. Except that we hear nothing more of such gallant performances as blowing down girls' necks, Steven's behavior continued about the same. His restlessness, inattention, and capacity for stirring up the other children in the group began, moreover—or more likely continued—to cause trouble in church and Sunday school, and he was finally ejected both from class and choir. Mrs. Guthrie did not intervene to save him from this disgrace, nor attempt to get him reinstated, but let him feel his ejection as

the natural consequence of what he had done      At home he went through phases of misbehavior which once that winter took the form of a typical temper tantrum, but usually were less noisy. He continued to short change Mrs. Guthrie at intervals, and to spend the money on things he wanted. He and the foster mother evidently talked these doings over, for once in the spring she tells the visitor that he says an uncontrollable impulse comes over him at such times. He also says he always wanted to steal, but never dared to do it before. By summer she had ceased to send him on errands. As far as possible she kept these derelictions from the knowledge of Mr. Guthrie, who would have been far more upset by them than she was. She showed good judgment in not nagging the child—said what she had to say at the time, as each iniquity came to light, then let the matter drop.

All through these difficult months there seems never to have been any real question of the Guthries' giving Steven up. However, it would appear that Mr. Guthrie did sometimes threaten him, for once he tells the visitor how the boy had said, "Oh, you won't really send me away, you like me too much." The visitor takes this occasion to explain the possible devastating effects of such threats, illustrating by the harm done to other children, and Mr. Guthrie agrees not to threaten Steven again. The visitor doubts if he really understands, he is very fond of the boy, very simple hearted and easy, and not at all consistent.

An episode of a different sort, related by Mrs. Guthrie that same spring, shows what terms she was on with her charge even during a period when his behavior was seriously disturbing. Steven wanted to know (she said) what she was going to leave him when she died. She reflected and replied the silver spoons her mother had left her. He was delighted

—he loved old family things, and announced that he was going to give them to his wife!

In taking stock, at the end of the boy's first year in the home, despite the failure to clear up of such serious problems as his stealing and lying, his restlessness and disturbing group behavior, and his continued inability to get on with boys of his age, certain definite improvements were to be noted. His sleep, which at first had been restless and punctuated by nightmares, was now peaceful and unbroken. He had controlled his fear of the dentist and all needed dental work had been done. His posture had improved, his bearing was now more that of a normal boy both at home and when he came in to the agency for the periodic physical examinations, and in all sorts of ways he showed himself to be a far happier child. The record was not one to grow elated about, but those who were in direct contact with the boy, however discouraged they might feel at times, never came anywhere near giving up.

In the first half of Steven's second year with the Guthries, a composite curve of his behavior, had one been plotted, would have dipped to a new low. In school, no improvement, at home, refusal to accept help with his studies, inability to concentrate on anything, continued dishonesty and unreliability, in the neighborhood, such conspicuous inability to get on with the other kids that the neighbors shake their heads and begin to wonder audibly if he is quite right. Mrs. Guthrie looked unwontedly grave, when seen in October, and said she was afraid Steven was deteriorating.

Then an attack of unexplained pain raised questions which seemed to demand a period of observation in a hospital. The condition cleared up and Steven returned home in about ten

days To the foster mother he recounted his adventures in great detail how he was given an anaesthetic, how he felt when he came out from under its influence after the operation, and so on The only trouble with this tale was that there had been no anaesthetic and no operation When he went on to tell how the doctors had beaten him, Mrs Guthrie decided that there was something unwholesome in the direction his imagination was taking Accordingly, the next time they went back to the hospital for a check up she told the physician there about it He said the boy had been very babyish and fearful while in the ward, and advised that he be taken to see their mental specialist

To carry out this plan meant weekly visits to the city for a period of about a year The prospect did not dismay Mrs Guthrie If there was anything that would help Steven, she was determined he should have it Mr Guthrie was equally concerned Week after week, in his car or by rail, they journeyed in with the youngster, and Mrs Guthrie sat in the hospital waiting room while Steven went in to visit with the psychiatrist

Far from showing any improvement that winter, Steven was harder to manage than ever He liked his psychiatrist, and showed a willingness to make the weekly trip to town which did not seem to be wholly accounted for by the obvious advantages of skipping school and driving in with Uncle Clem and Aunt Nell But at home he was more restless and uneasy, more unreliable and moody than ever And early in March, on one of those bitter evenings when it seems that spring will never come, with Mr Guthrie away in town, Steve broke all previous records by a temper tantrum that lasted for hours, an outbreak so violent that it seemed to Mrs Guthrie to suggest insanity, and left her exhausted to



a point where for the first time she telephoned the agency that she thought she'd have to give Steven up.

She didn't do it. After being kept in bed for a day to recover himself, the boy returned to the daily round with that chastened air which so often follows an emotional debauch. The psychiatrist, consulted, stated that difficulties were likely to be accentuated during the early months of treatment, but that if the foster parents would only hang on, improvement would surely follow. They hung. And, true enough, from this point on a distinct upward trend was discernible, with hopeful notes far outnumbering discouraging ones. Before the end of that month the foster mother had reported with satisfaction an assortment of miscellaneous items which included the following: Steven was now able to sit still for a long time listening to the radio; he had actually thrown another boy into the snow; he was not so aimless at home, seemed to know how to use his time; he had been playing beautifully with the boys; he had told her he was sorry for the way he had acted, that time, and was never going to act like that again; the boys were calling for him, he had an assured, happy, positive attitude; he was becoming very solicitous for her and for a woman guest, whom he had escorted across the street with great care; he seemed to have much better control and coordination than formerly, no longer spilled things as he used to; he was studying every night. . . . The visitor noted that the Guthries now spoke as though they were going to keep the boy indefinitely. They speculated as to what he would look like when he grew up; and on one occasion, after she had removed several pieces of wearing apparel and miscellaneous objects from various of the sitting-room chairs upon which they had been casually cast, Mrs. Guthrie was heard remarking to Steven with mild

asperity that she supposed she'd still be picking up after him when he was twenty-one

With characteristic generosity, Mrs Guthrie was quite ready to give credit for this improvement to the psychiatrist. The psychiatrist, however, expressed surprise that it should be coming so soon, seemed, in fact, almost to doubt its reality, so far in advance of schedule was it. Whatever caused it, the improvement continued.

There were, to be sure, some back slidings. Thus, in June, Steve was reported to be disobedient and sullen, and Mr Guthrie to be discouraged and to have actually struck the boy three times with a strap—the first reported chastisement in the home. No serious consequences seem to have ensued for anybody, and later in the month the foster mother, asked by the visitor if she had ever regretted taking Steven, responded with an emphatic *no* she was very fond of him and interested to watch his development. She believed that in another two years he'd be "just like any normal boy."

Later in the summer, and shortly before the end of Steven's second year in the home, comes a further report. Steven is fine, now. He helps around the house and for several months it has been possible to trust him with errands—he brings back the right change. He had a fight with a boy the other day, and didn't cry, they are now good friends and all is forgotten. The neighbors are talking about the great improvement in Steven. he takes his own part and is "as fresh as the other boys."

Steven's school problem is, however, not yet solved. With the coming of fall he is in hot water again there, though in all his other relations the ground gained during recent months is held. If only this particular suburban school system had the flexibility of some! But its huge classes and

wooden uniformity of curriculum make any sort of special adjustment to the needs of an exceptional child impossible. Whether ten-year-old Steven will succeed in doing all the adjusting that the system calls for appears at this point doubtful. His teacher has a class of forty, including several who are over age and subnormal. It is not so much that Steven does worse things than the other boys as that he does them all the time. His restlessness is excessive, his powers of concentration almost nil.

Despite school troubles, Mrs. Guthrie doesn't think Steve seems like an unhappy child—not when she remembers what he was when he came to her. He never cringes now, or talks of beatings. He has become quite confidential of late; has told her a lot about his early life at the Church Home and the orphanage, and has wanted to talk with her about his father and mother. She has told him she really doesn't know about them; she never asked, when he came, because it didn't matter to her. She and Steven have been together a lot because Mr. Guthrie has been away, working at odd hours. When they do the dishes at night she sings. Steven enjoys this and tells her she has a good voice. Sometimes he gets his school song-book and sings; he has a good voice, too, and knows it, she says. She has shown him pictures of herself taken when she was a professional singer. He says he likes her looks better now.

In the fall, at the beginning of Steven's third year with them, the Guthries moved again—to a neighboring town where, happily, there is an up-to-date, well-equipped school—though the classes are still huge. Steve had many times expressed his desire to be known as Steven Guthrie, and at this point he took matters into his own hands and asked the

principal to enter him by this name. The principal, a woman of broad understanding, had received a report about the child from his former school. Without consulting anyone she acceded to his wishes. Agency and foster parents were thus confronted with a *fait accompli* (to their considerable amusement—and relief; for it had been hard to know what to do about the matter, since Steve is not legally adopted). Steven reports himself very happy in this school; he loves the gym work and likes his teacher. She, it turns out, is a young woman who has had special training and several years' experience in teaching a special class. She understands Steven's problem, and though his restlessness makes it hard for her to handle him in the regular fourth-grade room over which she now presides, she contrives to make him happy and to teach him something. Steven announces with pride, "My teacher likes me."

Recently Steven's psychiatrist has been called to a clinic in another city. In one of her last interviews with Steven she apparently said something about his worrying; for to his foster mother, at home, he later insisted that the doctor was mistaken, that he wasn't worrying. Mrs. Guthrie finally asked him if he knew what "worry" meant. He replied, "Of course I do. If anything should happen to you I would be worried." Then, thoughtfully, "I used to worry, but I don't any more."

## *“The Kind Who Don’t Care”*

“I’M *through*. You can do what you like with the children.” This announcement of his wife’s, and her departure, leaving him in process of being put out of their furnished room with their small son and daughter, formed the climax of the story young Mr. Scherer unfolded at the reception desk of the child-placing agency.

Hardly less striking, however, was a statement this well-groomed, immaculately clothed young man himself made a few minutes later. He and the interviewer had discussed his situation briefly and, at her suggestion, he had filled out an application blank. As she was leaving the room to consult with her chief as to what the agency might be able to do for him, he flung this challenge after her: “If I don’t have a place for those children next week I’ll bring them in here and leave them, and you’ll *have* to take care of them. You wouldn’t put them out on the street.”

It was not to be wondered at that this young couple were feeling desperate. For nine months Mr. Scherer, who formerly made “good money” as an actor on the vaudeville stage, had been without a job. Their savings—never large, for like most young Americans of boom days they had lived up to their income—had been exhausted. They had been forced to give up their comfortable apartment and the nurse-maid who for the past three years had cared for the twins, and to move into a furnished room. Mrs. Scherer’s small salary—she worked as a manicurist—had proved utterly insufficient for four people accustomed to their scale of living. Then came a new crisis, and the mother abandoned what doubtless seemed to her a hopeless struggle. Her husband

took Kit and Kitty to a sister of his who had cared for them before, when they were babies, and there they had now been for several weeks. But the arrangement could not last much longer—his sister's husband, once a prosperous man but now with a liquidated business behind him, was planning to leave within a few days for the west, where he hoped to be able to make a new start. Mr. Scherer himself was sleeping round with relatives and friends—a night here and a night there. He had no idea, he said, where his wife was. As he summed it up: "I can't get work or do anything till the children are settled. I've got to have help."

There was a genuine emergency in this family, of this the worker who received the application felt reasonably sure, and her impression was verified as relatives and friends were interviewed within the next few days. No less strong, however, was her impression that something besides an emergency was the matter, and this impression, too, was abundantly confirmed. Kit and Kitty Scherer were two among many children who would probably never have been known to a social agency had it not been for the depression, but that is not to say that if boom days had continued indefinitely things would have gone altogether well with them in their own home.

Social workers often think that they find an explanation for the behavior both of children and of parents in early life experiences. In the case of Mr. and Mrs. Scherer, certain explanations were offered, first by the young husband as he sketched his family history on that first day at the office, again by his father-in-law, who came in a few days later to talk things over.

As regards Mrs. Scherer, the testimony of her father, Mr. Hanover, is especially revealing. A man apparently between

fifty and sixty, intelligent and cultivated, he seemed both clear sighted and frank. He and his wife were musicians, and during the years when their only daughter was growing up had been almost constantly on the road. They had boarded the child out at first, and later had placed her in a convent school. Only rarely had they visited her, and once or twice they had been without news of her for months at a stretch. At times she had been neglected and even ill treated, at other times petted and spoiled—for she was extremely pretty. She had received only the most superficial education, and so little affection from her parents that he thought she had never learned to love, her mother especially—who, he said, was a woman of fine character but cold emotionally—had never been in the least demonstrative with her. To these early deprivations he attributed Mrs. Scherer's indifference to her home and neglect of her children, which he indicated had been extreme. He had been shocked at the dirty, even verminous, condition in which he had found them. Sometimes he wondered if she were quite right mentally, she behaved so strangely. For example, once a friend who was calling had fainted away, Mrs. Scherer immediately put on her hat and went out, leaving the twins alone with the guest—apparently not caring what happened to her or them, if only she could be out of the way. When the children were two years old Kitty had pushed Kit down a flight of stairs, with resulting injury to one leg. Mr. Hanover did not know how happy his daughter had been in her marital life, but thought her husband was genuinely fond of her and she was as fond of him as she was capable of being.

Of his son-in-law's family Mr. Hanover spoke in the highest terms. They took good care of their own. Especially had Mr. Scherer's eldest sister done a great deal, when she

and her husband could ill afford it, for their mother, their sisters, and Kit and Kitty. This aunt and uncle had even talked of adopting the twins. Knowing that they had offered to be responsible for the board of one of them, Mr. Hanover wondered how they could undertake this after the severe losses they had met with. He himself had been long out of work and was heavily in debt, or he would contribute toward the children's support. He was ready to do any kind of work, had even been trying to get a porter's job, but couldn't land one.

Some account of the Scherer family had already been received from two of its members. The children's father, after speaking of his wife's early life, remarked: "Now I was brought up entirely differently." He said he had been the only son, had been sick with every known disease till he was seven, and as a result had been much overprotected by his mother. He believed this had spoiled him "in a way." His father had died when he was in his teens and his mother had married again so that her children should not have to support her; she was not willing to have them kept from marrying early and having lives of their own. She had died a year ago.

Mr. Scherer had met his wife soon after she left the convent. They had been married before she was twenty. She had gone back to work after her marriage and again after the birth of the twins, preferring to be out of the home as much as possible. Kit and Kitty had spent part of their infancy with their aunt; then an Irish nursemaid had been engaged who had been with them steadily for three years. Their father stated that they had been well trained by this nurse. Their aunt said their training had been poor, that Kit was easily managed but Kitty did not seem to know what it meant to



mind; yesterday she had been put to bed because she wouldn't eat her dinner.

According to this same aunt, the children seemed to have no affection for their mother and to take all their relatives, including their father, casually. They apparently did not mind being moved, and so long as they had toys to play with seemed contented. This agreed with what their father had said when he was asked how well he knew the children: "I know them *very* well. . . . They are the kind who don't care who comes or goes. They are happy if you give them a little toy."

Four days after Mr. Scherer requested that his son Christopher and his daughter Katherine be taken under care by the agency, they were accepted and placed temporarily in a small institution.

The twins at this time were nearly five years old. They did not resemble each other closely, though both were brown-haired and dark-eyed; Kitty, somewhat smaller, with a piquant little face, was the more attractive of the two; her brother was rather drab-looking in comparison and one of his legs was somewhat shorter than the other. They appeared to be devoted to one another. Both children were found to be in good physical condition except for Kit's lameness. They went willingly to the institution, which they had been told by their father was a school.

Here they were considered polite, well-behaved children. During their stay they were visited several times by their father and by their grandparents, whose attitude toward them was kindly and affectionate. On one of these occasions the grandparents asked them where, of all the places they had lived, they had enjoyed themselves most. Both children promptly answered "Here." Long afterwards, however, their

mother told their visitor that Kitty had been unhappy at the institution. The discrepancy remains unexplained.

Finding exactly the right home for two children is naturally a problem involving somewhat different considerations from that of finding a home for a single child. And finding a home for children of young, healthy parents who will probably soon reclaim them is, again, quite a different problem from that of finding a home for an orphaned or abandoned child.

Now it happened that the agency had recently received an application for children to board from a couple with one small child of their own: professional people with a pleasant suburban home, who had made a decidedly favorable impression upon those who interviewed them. Mr. Kepler's salary had been severely cut during the depression but they were still able to manage. They had nearly finished paying for their home—a seven-room house, comfortably furnished, well kept, and homelike. More important still, from all the evidence available—and not only the Keplers but several friends and relatives of theirs were seen—they appeared to be deeply and genuinely attached to one another and to their child, a little boy, who was just beginning to walk. Mrs. Kepler was a frank, friendly woman in her late thirties, with a pleasant outgoing manner. She showed that she appreciated the responsibilities of a child-placing agency by saying to the visitor who came to investigate her home, "Of course you want to know things, so don't hesitate to ask whatever you like." She spoke freely of her childhood and youth. Her mother had died when she was six, and she had so intensely resented the coming of a stepmother—"an old maid by nature" who ruled the household with an iron hand—that by

the time she was nine her defiance led to her being placed in a convent. Here she had remained till she was fourteen, growing very fond of the Sisters but often wishing she had a mother, and a little sister to sleep with. She did have a big brother who by this time was married and to whose home she went from the convent. Here she remained till she left to make a home of her own. Her first marriage did not last long: her husband was a domineering man much older than herself—they "couldn't go on." It was nearly fifteen years since she had divorced him and had gone to work to support herself and her little daughter.

She and Mr. Kepler had met seven years ago when they were thrown together in the same business office. They became friends at once. When, after a year of lunching and walking to and from work together, he had asked her to marry him, she had hesitated because she was several years older than he, but he had persisted. Of their married life she said, "We have been happy these six years." She had continued to work till she became pregnant. Their interests centered mainly in their home, but they kept up some outside associations, Mr. Kepler playing cards with a group of men in the neighborhood one or two evenings a week, Mrs. Kepler having an active connection with a nearby church. She was on excellent terms with her relatives-in-law who lived near by.

Mr. Kepler, as well as his wife, was seen by the agency's investigator at their home. He had a fine face and a gentle way of speaking, and while at first he appeared somewhat retiring, soon lost this manner and showed that he was intelligent and had ideas of his own. His handling of his small son impressed the visitor as sensible. He spoke of having thought seriously about the best way to bring the youngster up and

having come to the conclusion that the new ideas on child training were much sounder than the old. He supposed he had been a problem himself as a child, for he was headstrong and stubborn—behavior which he now saw had been the result of spoiling; he had been an only son with an older and a younger sister. His father had died when he was fourteen, but his mother had worked and kept the family together, his older sister had found a job, and he had been enabled to go through high school, after which he continued his education at night. . . . He liked children if they were well behaved, he said, and thought their behavior depended upon the way they were treated. Any child he and his wife might take into their home he was sure would soon fall into their ways. But he was a little afraid she might find herself overburdened if she undertook the care of two additional small children.

Mrs. Kepler thought there would be no danger of this. She had plenty of energy, and since the house was large enough and she was fond of children, she would like to take one or two. All the ideas she expressed on the training of children were sound and sensible. She criticized herself for mistakes she had made with her daughter—spanking when she was little, a tendency to make her feel too responsible at an early age—mistakes which she did not intend to repeat with her son. Her relation with the daughter had always been a happy one, however, and since the girl had married and gone west last year she heard from her often. . . . She thought it would be good for the baby to have other children in the house. She explained that she was not demonstrative even with her own child, but that she believed she knew how to enter into children's interests and make pals of them—and the visitor, watching her laugh with her small son, was inclined to believe this true.

In a conference held at the child-placing agency a few days after the Scherer twins were taken under care, plans for them were discussed. It was realized that little was known about the children beyond their appearance and the fact that they were physically well and (apparently) normal mentally. Their father had emphasized their being twins and alike rather than any differences between them, and their personalities were as yet not clearly defined to any member of the group.

Impressions of their parents were somewhat clearer. Those who had talked with the father felt that he was a decidedly immature individual who showed a tendency to depend on others. The mother had not been seen, but from the statements of her father and her husband it seemed probable that she was even more immature and ready to shift responsibility than he, and that she had never cared for her children. The unconcern shown by the twins on being taken from their own home and placed among strangers might thus be explained by their never having had the love and interest of a real father and mother. They showed affection for their grandparents, but this was felt not to be very deep.

The Kepler home was considered for these children. Both parents were well adjusted to their neighborhood; both seemed mature individuals with wholesome parental attitudes toward their own child and an interest in others. It was felt that they would both be capable of taking on two additional children, and that they could be prepared for the effect which the entrance of Kit and Kitty upon the scene might have on their own child.

Miss Hale, the visitor who was to have charge of the twins, had participated in the placement conference. Presently she went to call on Mrs. Kepler. She gave an account of the chil-

dren and explained that the mother's whereabouts was unknown but that the father would probably visit regularly and the grandparents infrequently Mrs Kepler seemed a person who would reserve her opinion until she was sure of it, also an understanding person who would be cooperative and willing to accept new ideas She expressed willingness to come in to town to get the twins, arranging with a neighbor to take care of her baby meanwhile, and would also bring them in for the semi annual physical examinations

Differences between the twins began to emerge on the day they were transferred to the foster home The worker in charge of the institution gave it as her opinion that Kitty was the more intelligent of the two, and the visitor observed that the little girl showed much more self reliance and initiative than her brother, who was quieter and more easily managed Although the first judgment as to the children's relative intelligence proved to be incorrect, the traits noted continued to characterize them throughout the two and a half years they were known to the agency

From the children's first appearance in their home, all three of the Keplers were attracted to them Immediately upon their arrival baby Fran began to follow them around and offer them his toys, and cried whenever they left his side At first, and throughout their stay, Kit displayed more affection for the child than did his sister, and received more in return, but Kitty grew increasingly fond of him, and neither child seems ever, in the twenty-one months they spent in this home, to have shown any but a kindly feeling for the little thing This is, of course, the best possible evidence that the foster parents were able to handle the three without showing favoritism for their own

Soon after the placement, Mr. Kepler is reported by his wife to be very fond of the twins and to enjoy having them in the home; later his kindly, firm manner with them is observed, and he talks of them affectionately and with appreciation. Mrs. Kepler, too, is pleased with them, considers them well-mannered children, and takes an interest in helping them overcome such difficulties as they present.

The first difficulty to show itself was Kitty's overbearing attitude toward Kit, and his corresponding meekness. Both children expected the little girl to be waited on first, a fact partly explainable in terms of habit, since—as was later learned—it had been the custom of the nursemaid who cared for them so long to give precedence to all her demands. The two played nicely together, but this was because Kit always gave in. When they entered the house Kitty would take off her coat and hat and hand them to Kit, telling him to put them away, and he would obey her command. Mrs. Kepler began at once to emphasize the point that the two would be treated alike, and to encourage Kit to stand up for his rights and "fight back" when his sister took advantage of him. Her efforts succeeded to a degree: Kitty quieted down a good deal, Kit became less timid and stood up for his rights more often (with the result that quarrels between them became more frequent). It is doubtful, however, whether there was any change in the fundamental pattern of the children's relationship; in the main, Kitty seems rather generally to have had her way. She was quicker, more alert, and more skilful in the use of her hands; he, more thoughtful and sensitive; and no way seems yet to have been discovered of erasing such deep-lying differences of temperament and make-up, or of ironing out differing reactions to them on the part of adults.

Returning, from this glance ahead, to the situation in the

foster home during the first few months following placement, it would appear that the children were from the beginning content. Miss Hale on her early visits to the home noted that they were fearful lest her coming meant they were to be removed, and took pains to reassure them on this point. Their father was entirely satisfied with the foster home, their grandfather said, "Mrs. Kepler is a dear." The children were placed in kindergarten and learned better play habits there, they had colds and got over them, and looked healthy and happy. Tonsil and adenoid operations, from which they recovered normally, were episodes of that first spring in the Kepler home.

For several months Mr. Scherer continued to have no job and no fixed address. He and his relatives declared themselves unable to pay even for one child. Then he took a job which lasted for a few weeks but netted him, he reported, next to nothing. He kept in touch with the agency, and visited the children fairly often when in town. Other jobs followed, all similarly short lived and unproductive. The depression was at its worst.

During his first long absence from the city his wife for the first time went to see the children, and came to the agency's office. She was an attractive dark haired young woman who appeared younger than her twenty five years. Her account of the rift with her husband differed from his, and made him appear mainly responsible for it. She was ready to live with him again if he could make enough to support his family, she wanted her children back, she said. She spoke of her husband as a spoiled child. He was lazy and loved to lie abed mornings, never would help about the house even when she was working and he wasn't, and always waited for jobs to turn up, instead of going out for them. She herself was unem-



ployed at the moment, and was having a difficult time hunting for work. She spoke with enthusiasm of what a fine man her father was, how scrupulous about money matters, recently when he had work for a few weeks he paid out most of what he earned on back debts.

After the children had been about ten months in the Kepler home it was felt to be necessary to arrange for treatment of Kit at an orthopaedic clinic in the city. Visits three times a week were considered by the physician in charge to be absolutely necessary. This meant, of course, an interruption of the child's school life (the twins were now in the first grade). It meant also arranging for an adult to make the trip with him each time. Though no such extra duty had been anticipated by the foster mother when she took the twins into her home, she showed a fine spirit of cooperation, assuming that if one of the children needed such care she must give it. The agency, however, was able to arrange for a volunteer to call for the child one day a week, and for Miss Hale to assume responsibility on another day. Mrs. Kepler expressed appreciation of this help. The agency also approached Mr. Scherer, who was not working at the time but was again living with his wife. He made the trip once or twice with his son but assured the worker that he was looking for work all the time, so could not assume any regular responsibility. Occasionally, when out of work, his wife accompanied Kit. Practically the entire undertaking was, however, carried through by the agency and its allied workers.

On these trips with Kit both the visitor and the foster mother found that the child was greatly upset when they left him for treatment, and both had difficulty in convincing him that he could rely on their promises to wait for him or to come back for him at the end of the treatment period. In

talking it over with Miss Hale, Mrs. Kepler explained the boy's lack of trust in their word by his experience with his parents, who continually made all sorts of promises to the twins which they didn't carry out. They would declare positively that they would come on a certain day, and all that afternoon the children would be on the look-out for them, only to be disappointed; or they would promise to bring toys or clothing which never materialized.

Nevertheless, unsatisfying as the children's relations with their parents were at this time—and apparently had always been—it soon became evident that their aunt had been mistaken in thinking that they did not love their mother and had only a casual relationship with their father. The father's own characterization of them as "the kind that don't care who comes or goes" proved how far he had been from knowing them as well as he thought he did. A series of remarks by his small son, quoted in the record, permit one dimly to apprehend emotional states which much older persons would have difficulty in putting into words.

The first two of these quoted sayings would seem, taken by themselves, to support the aunt's interpretation. When the children's mother came to see them for the first time, nearly three months after they were placed with the Keplers, she was affectionate with them and spent a great deal of time telling them about all the things she was going to get them and do for them. Kit listened for a while, then spoke up: "Why weren't you nice to us when we were with you?" . . . The second observation is reported two months later. Kit is about to be placed in a hospital for tonsillectomy, and is questioning the foster mother about who will bring him home next day. He knows his own mother brought Kitty home, when she was operated on a fortnight earlier, but he says to

Mrs. Kepler, "I would rather have you call for me." At this point it seems clear that the boy is rejecting his mother, presumably in unconscious response to her long-continued rejection of him.

However, six months later, on a trip to the clinic on which Kitty has been taken along for the ride, Kit, who has been talking at a great rate, remarks: "Do you know what I feel like doing? I feel like kissing Kitty." The visitor asks why he doesn't do it. He replies, "I am waiting till we get married," and goes on, "When I grow up I'm going to marry Kitty and my mother."

A month later the two children are again on their way to the clinic. To Miss Hale's surprise, they explain why they had been taken to the agency in the first place. Says Kitty, "Our daddy took us to the society because he had no money and no job. Our auntie is letting us live with her so she can take care of us." The visitor remarks that it is too bad their daddy hasn't any job, but that when he gets one they will go home and live with him and their mother. Kit replies: "If they want us we will."

Again, after an interval of a month, Miss Hale is taking Kit to the clinic. She asks him to guess who was at the office that morning to see her, and says "Yes" when he guesses right at the third attempt: "My father." Kit is pleased, and asks "in his very cute way": "Isn't he a nice father?" . . . A fortnight later he is told that the visitor saw his mother the day before. He looks pleased again, and queries, "Isn't she a nice mother?"

Some months later, he and the visitor are talking about dreams, and he says the dreams he likes best are the ones about Santa Claus and his mother. Presently he veers to the subject of babies, and wonders how they know enough to pick

out their mothers and daddies, adding enthusiastically, "I picked out good ones, didn't I?"

Once this spring, when he is six, he stays with his mother overnight, after his clinic visit. She takes him to visit his relatives, and to the zoo, and gives him a wonderful time. When she brings him back to the foster home he cries and cries, and (according to the foster mother) develops a "mother complex." Mrs. Kepler makes the usual explanations about going home when daddy gets a job, but he forms a habit of crying whenever his mother leaves after a visit, something he had not formerly done. However, that summer, after two nights spent with Kitty at their parents' room, he seems glad, as does she, to be back in the foster home.

Again several months elapse. The foster father, who is having only part-time work now, is considering going with his family to a western city, and the foster mother, well in advance of the possible move, explains to the agency that they may have to give the children up. The agency calls Mr. and Mrs. Scherer into consultation. They have been visiting more frequently of late, and it seems to both the visitor and Mrs. Kepler as though the mother, particularly, had been growing better acquainted with her children and more attached to them. Is there no possible way in which the parents can plan to take the children now, when being in their own home would evidently mean so much to them? There is discussion of possibilities, but the parents see no way. They promise, however, if the twins are placed in another boarding home, to bend every effort toward devising some plan which will enable them to take the youngsters, say, after a temporary placement of two months.

Meanwhile the news has to be broken to Kit and Kitty. Again, on one of those trips to the clinic which provided the

visitor with so many opportunities for getting better acquainted with Kit, he asks why she has to find another home for him and Kitty, why they can't go home to their mother and father; he wants to go home. Miss Hale repeats the old familiar explanation about his father's having no job—an explanation which the children themselves had once given as the reason for their coming to the agency. Evidently it fails to satisfy the boy. He immediately begins to talk about something else. . . . A few weeks pass, and Kit once more speaks of the Keplers' approaching departure, and of how he and Kitty will miss the baby, and asks if they can't go home. The familiar answer follows, and again he changes the subject abruptly. . . . To a child not yet seven, one surmises, a job is something remote and dim, and the lack of one means too little to serve as an adequate explanation for the ever-present, perplexing reality of separation from own parents. Nearly seven, however, is ever so much older than five. When one is a big boy and goes to school, one probably notices that most children, even poor ones, live with their parents, and wonders why one's sister and oneself are different.

Interestingly, it is from Kit that these little speeches and displays of emotion regarding their parents come, not from Kitty. This is not merely because more time is spent with him by the workers who report. In one of her talks with the visitor, their mother says her husband favors Kit because he is much more responsive, he clings to his father during visits. Afterwards, Mr. Scherer will say that separation does not matter to Kitty but that Kit really wants them. Mrs. Scherer agrees with the visitor that the two children might react differently to the same thing (or the same emotion?) and when the visitor asks whether she thinks they sense the difference in their father's feelings toward them, she says she tries to

keep him from showing it but "he slips sometimes." The visitor comments sympathetically that it really is difficult to keep from showing such a difference in feeling. The mother then goes on to say that the father loves Kitty, too, in a different way, and that *she* "loves them both to exactly the same extent." Observations later reported from the foster home indicate, however, that Mrs. Scherer, too, sometimes showed a preference for her son. Indeed, the early-reported preference of both parents for Kit had suggested an explanation for Kitty's aggressive behavior which the agency thought plausible—namely, that she was striving for attention to compensate for being the non-favorite. Kitty's grandfather seems to have been the one person who all along frankly preferred her to her brother. Mrs. Kepler from the time she took the children had as frankly admitted an inclination to favor Kit which she made every effort to check. Although the little girl had the advantage of striking prettiness and lively ways, the small boy's gentleness and thoughtfulness, his apparent greater depth of feeling, evidently made a stronger appeal to a majority of the adults who came in contact with the two children.

As the period of their stay in the Kepler home draws to a close, is it possible to say what, in the home situation and the management of the children, accounts for the satisfaction which parents and agency alike felt with it?

One conversation with the children's own mother is revealing on this point. She has been telling about how overwhelmed she and her husband were by the birth of two babies when only one was expected, how utterly uninformed about the care of babies they both were and what mistakes they made, until finally they were able to solve the problem with an excellent nursemaid. She has spoken, too, of the "hectic

time" she herself had as a child, both in the convent and in private homes where she was boarded. The visitor asks: did these unpleasant experiences make her hesitate about having the children in a boarding home? The mother replies, "Oh, but Mrs. Kepler is wonderful with them," and goes on to speak of the "unlimited patience" the foster mother shows, and her calm manner. How is it, she wonders, that the twins don't worry Mrs. Kepler more? She adds, "But I was quite patient with them. I never struck them except to spank their hands occasionally." It is evident, however (Miss Hale comments), that she feels she was far less patient than the foster mother is.

Patience and calmness undoubtedly go a long way in the handling of boys and girls of any age, and with young normal children like the twins, who present no dire problems, these characteristics may largely explain the high esteem in which Mrs. Kepler's service was held. If so, part of the credit should go to Mr. Kepler, who showed the same virtues to a marked degree. The foster parents were evidently in full harmony, so that the youngsters were not confused by the conflicting commands and cross-currents of emotion which interfere with consistent management in so many homes.

With all her patience, however, Mrs. Kepler was firm—consistently firm. She said herself that the children—her own baby as well as the twins—had to "walk a chalk line." One gathers that there was a regular routine, that they knew they could depend on the foster mother and that her rulings were not to be evaded. She held herself responsible for the twins just as she did for her small son, which meant that she gave close attention not only to physical care and health needs, but to training in what she regarded as social essentials.

In any system of training the ends sought as social essen-

tials and the methods employed are of interest. Two of the major objectives of Mrs. Kepler's training, one gathers, were fair play and self-control. A series of small incidents gleaned from the record give us glimpses of how this foster mother dealt with violations of her code on these points.

Kitty's tyrannizing over Kit and his submissiveness were, as has already been mentioned, the outstanding problem when the children came to this home, and Mrs. Kepler at once began to bolster up the boy's resistance and try to stop his sister's bullying. One day, after he had begun to show a little backbone, Kitty demanded that he get off their tricycle, and when he didn't do it, stamped her foot and screamed as loud as she could. The foster mother, who was watching from a window, ran out, brought her in, and spanked her, *telling her that she could not treat her brother that way.*

On another day, some months later, the visitor invites Kitty to accompany her and Kit on their ride to the clinic. The foster mother says the child has been naughty and can't go. Kitty doesn't cry or fuss but goes on with her play. The visitor, impressed, later comments on this to Mrs. Kepler. The foster mother replies, "She knows I will not stand for crying. Of course, if one of them is hurt that's a different matter, but crying for no good reason isn't allowed." This, she added, applied to the baby as well as to the twins.

We have here two of the oldest methods of enforcing discipline known to parents: corporal punishment and deprivation of pleasures. Deprivation, probably often used, we do not find reference to again. Spanking is mentioned in two other connections: once when Kit and Kitty have used a "dirty" word to a small neighbor they are both spanked, and once the foster mother remarks that the only way she can make Kit remember things is by spanking him. It would



seem, then, that she made fairly frequent use of this disciplinary measure, a fact which is of interest in view of her statement in an early interview that she regretted having whipped her daughter when she was small and didn't intend to repeat the mistake with her son. There is no indication in the record that this or other ways of enforcing discipline were ever discussed with her—which, in view of the agency's keen interest in protecting children from harsh treatment and its often-expressed approval of this foster mother, may be evidence that the spankings were not believed to be severe. It is possible either that an unrecorded discussion took place, or that an opportunity for one was missed.

Mrs. Kepler's emphasis on self-control in the matter of tears comes in for fuller discussion in connection with Kit's "mother complex," already mentioned. When he cried upon his mother's leaving, the foster mother carefully explained why he could not go with her, and on a later occasion the mother also explained. He, however, wept again, the next time his mother departed, whereupon Mrs. Kepler told him that unless he could stop doing this she would tell his mother to visit only once a month, and if that did not work he would have to go somewhere else to live. On the occasion of Mrs. Scherer's next visit the child "controlled himself quite well and said, 'Aunty, am I doing all right this time?'" The visitor, in reporting this incident, remarks that she "feels foster mother is not entirely understanding of the situation." The record contains no evidence that it was discussed, or that any effort to modify Mrs. Kepler's attitude was made.

This is the only comment unfavorable to Mrs. Kepler's handling of the twins which the reviewer finds in the record. Anything in the nature of a suggestion to a child that he may have to leave a foster home because of misbehavior is heartily

disapproved by this and other child-placing agencies of the better sort, and frequently efforts to make foster parents understand the harm such threats may do are recorded; whether, and if so why, this case was differently handled at this point we do not know.

The methods of this foster mother, as exemplified in the above notes, are evidently also open to criticism by those who believe that young children can be managed without any resort to corporal punishment. The present reviewer, without attempting to take sides in such a debate (except to note that some of the finest mothers and aunts of her acquaintance have made a judicious use of spanking), records her impression that while Mrs. Kepler apparently did lack subtle psychological understanding of emotional problems, her emphasis on self-control had tonic values which are not to be overlooked. Since going home just then was out of the question for Kit, she was at least helping him to face hard reality with composure! The fact that all the adults who visited this home in the interest of the children had a high opinion of her management of them counts heavily in her favor. So does her frankness in discussing her own limitations—she says once that she is trying hard to overcome her disinclination to express affection, because she feels that the children, Kitty especially, need more love; and again she tells how carefully she watches herself to keep from favoring Kit in any way, how she catches herself in the act of doing so and checks herself. As to her actual affection for the twins, it is evidenced not only by the trouble she takes to serve their real interests, but in indirect ways which to this reviewer carry more conviction than would a flood of endearments from a less reserved person. Thus, on one occasion, she is telling the visitor how the children's parents took them for a single night and kept them two: "The

house seemed so empty and quiet while they were away, and every few minutes Fran would ask, 'Where are Kit and Kitty?' Sometimes I think they are a great care, but when they did not come back the second night I was just as worried as if it had been Fran. I should be very lonely without them."

Nevertheless, one cannot help reflecting that if Mrs. Kepler had shown Kit more tenderness and had refrained from spanking him, he might not have grown so homesick.

One advantage in having the twins in their home which both foster parents commented upon was the benefit to their own child from the companionship thus provided. They do not go into details but speak of Kit's devotion to Fran and Fran's to him. One glimpse afforded us of the youngsters at lunch shows us the adored big brother held up as a shining example: "See, Fran, Kit has finished his soup!" A scene described by the visitor gives an inkling of the sort of thing the foster parents may have had in mind. The twins were coming in for examination at the agency's clinic, and at the visitor's invitation Mrs. Kepler brought her son to be looked over at the same time. Kit and Kitty (we read) behaved very nicely while being examined. They had to be brave for the sake of Fran, who was quite frightened. They did everything they could think of to distract the little fellow's attention and were very sweet with him. When he started crying Kit put his arms around him and told him that after they were through they were all going to the restaurant for lunch, and "Won't that be fun?" . . . The visitor adds: "Fran undoubtedly has had a good effect on Kit and Kitty and they on him."

In all her dealings with the agency, Mrs. Kepler was generous and cooperative. Her willing assumption of the task of

taking Kit to the orthopaedic clinic has been noted; this involved entering into an arrangement with a neighbor to take care of the baby and Kitty, and *no small inconvenience and loss of time from home duties*. Mrs. Kepler said, at first, that she really enjoyed the trip, but there must have been times during the year when it was a good deal of a burden. Another way in which she showed her fine spirit of service was in her reception of the news that the agency found itself compelled to reduce rates of board. Her husband's salary had been cut repeatedly during the preceding year or two. The reduction in board would mean even closer figuring, she said, but if she could help the agency in this emergency she was glad to make that sort of contribution.

When it became evident that there was no prospect of Mr. and Mrs. Scherer's taking the twins home at the time they left the Keplers, the agency faced the task of selecting another boarding home for Kit and Kitty. The one they finally chose had been strikingly successful with an older boy boarded there, a bright youngster who had been particularly happy in his relation with the foster father. This foster father was a middle-aged man of pleasing appearance and manner and athletic interests, who had enjoyed better than average opportunities, including a year or two of college. He had never had a child of his own but had enjoyed making comrades of neighboring boys and especially of his foster son, playing ball with them, and so on. His wife, ten years his junior, was attractive, intelligent, and warm-hearted. She had been a practical nurse and had good standards of home making and child care. Unpleasant relations between the foster son's own mother and these foster parents had led to the

boy's withdrawal, but the agency had held the mother accountable for these, as she was a difficult person to get on with and had been intensely jealous of her son's affection for the Duntons. The home was rated by the agency as above average in general culture, and it was felt that the foster parents would be able to give the twins impartial, objective handling and the affection which they, particularly Kitty, needed. Because the Duntons were a good deal older than the Scherers, it was hoped that they might be able to assume a more or less parental role toward the young couple. Some of the agency staff, however, raised the question whether Mrs. Dunton would be physically equal to the care of the two children?

On this point the Duntons were reassuring. Mr. Dunton did share the agency's fear that his wife might not be equal to the physical strain, but the two talked the matter over and decided to engage a maid—something they were planning to do soon in any case. In every way possible the visitor tried to prepare them for what they might expect of parents and children and what they might do to help them—as by letting the parents observe Mrs. Dunton's methods of caring for the children and the children's response to her care. These young parents would surely like Mrs. Dunton, the visitor told her, and would not be critical. This was, presumably, an inference from the uncritical enthusiasm they had always expressed for Mrs. Kepler.

How the twins were prepared for their transfer from the Kepler home to the Dunton home we are not told, but it was accomplished without any emotional upset on the part of either child; the new foster parents expressed themselves as pleased with the children; and a propitious start was appar-

ently made. Yet after a period of less than eight months Kit and Kitty were withdrawn from this home. What had occurred to bring about the change?

To answer this question fully would involve retelling the story of these eight months in more detail than seems worth while. Fundamentally, it was the children's, chiefly Kit's, growing unhappiness and confusion of mind over the anomalous situation in which they found themselves which brought about the change. How could seven year olds be expected to understand the causes which lay behind the occasional appearances upon the scene of parents, followed after a few hours by their disappearance for periods of uncertain length? These periods were longer now than formerly, for the Dunton home was farther from the city and the trip was a more expensive one, moreover, the Duntons lived a more active social life than the Keplers, and frequently asked the children's parents to postpone a visit till a more convenient date. With increasing intensity, Kit begged his parents to take him and Kitty home. Finally one day, after he had thus pleaded with his mother and been refused, he went to Mrs Dunton and asked if he might call her "mother." Embarrassed, she inquired what he would call Uncle Dick (her husband). After some thought Kit decided he would have to be "daddy." Kitty followed suit. The foster parents explained to the children that they could not take the place of their own parents, but to the visitor said that since the youngsters wished to call them by these names they saw no way out of it. Kit had tried his best to work things out with his own mother, and this new plan of his was apparently the best he could do in the way of solving his problem. To the agency it seemed evident that he felt he and his sister were practically abandoned, and was groping for some assurance of stability, for

something that would give him a sense of belonging in the substitute home.

Unfortunately, at this very time evidence was accumulating which made it seem certain that this second foster home could never supply the security needed by these particular children. Mrs. Dunton was indeed a motherly woman who gave Kit and Kitty kindly, affectionate care, and for a time it had seemed as though the children were being accepted by both foster parents. But Mr. Dunton, though he had played the role of father successfully with an older boy, had never before lived with such young children and found it difficult to get down to their level. More and more their constant presence and their noise fatigued and irritated him. He underestimated their intelligence, declaring to the visitor on one occasion that they had the minds of four-year-olds—though actually, by psychometric tests, both fell within the normal range for their age. It was evident that home meant to this man a place in which to relax after the day's grind and in which to entertain his friends, with both of which uses the children's presence interfered. All in all, the sum of his attitudes made his home hardly one in which any young child could count on happiness. Certainly for Kit and Kitty there was little prospect of it.

Repeatedly, throughout the period the twins spent in this home, the agency took up with the parents the question of their reassuming responsibility for their children, but always it was met by the same assertions of complete inability to do so. During a year when millions of families were on home relief, their heads utterly unable to find work, it is not surprising that Mr. Scherer could not make a living. Mrs. Scherer was employed most of the time but her wages barely sufficed for herself and her husband. Despite the real difficulties of

their situation, however, there was something in the attitude of these young people which convinced every worker who came in contact with them that they were more concerned for their own comfort than for their children's happiness. The father especially seemed what his wife said he was, a spoiled child, ever ready to let others carry his responsibilities for him. They might, of course, argue that the children were better off in the foster home than in a poor city tenement with the sort of fare, and care, that it would be possible to give them when the father was unemployed or working irregularly, the mother away from home all day, and dependence on relief at times a necessity. This is a point of view for which an argument of considerable force can be made out, but young, healthy parents who are devoted to their children seldom resort to it, for better or worse, they usually struggle against heavy odds to keep some sort of home together.

Whichever course is chosen, the inescapable fact is that the children suffer. Kit's confusion of mind, his evident feeling, at the end, that he is essentially abandoned by his own parents and must cling harder to foster parents, even to a rejecting foster father, in an effort to gain a feeling of belonging somewhere—this is a form of spiritual suffering which it is impossible to measure, to weigh in the balance against the disadvantages to a child of living with his own people through a period of anxiety and privation.

Not only did the children show themselves increasingly insecure during these months, their parents also grew restive, and finally voiced dissatisfaction with the foster home. Undoubtedly, as they saw their children less happy, their sense of guilt for having failed the youngsters as parents grew more intense, and in self defense they may have exaggerated the actual shortcomings of the foster parents. The foster



father resented their criticisms of the care his wife gave the children—criticisms which the agency also thought unjustified. Thus the tensions in the home increased and the need of making other plans for the twins grew imminent.

The question then arose: should an attempt be made to fit them into yet another foster home, or should institutional placement be resorted to? Several different lines of reasoning converged to swing the decision to the second alternative.

One line of reasoning concerned itself with the emotional strain which it was believed would be involved for the children, Kit especially, in shifting them to another foster home. Had the Keplers' home, or one that promised to be as nearly ideal, been available, the decision might have been different; indeed, could they have remained with the Keplers the question of institutional placement would probably never have arisen. ("That was a fine home!" the Scherers said, in reminiscent regret.) Yet even in this fine home, Kit had begun to be troubled by conflict over his separation from his parents, and in any home where the children were less loved and the parents treated with less complete tolerance and kindness it seemed certain that this conflict would increase as it had at the Duntons'. There was something upsetting to this child, apparently, in having two sets of parents—real ones who did not function as such, and substitutes who could not completely fill their place. Part of his trouble arose, the agency workers felt, from his feeling that he and his sister were somehow different from the other children with whom they came in contact in school and neighborhood.

In an institution, the agency workers reflected, there would be no second set of parents and no children living in their own homes with whom the twins could contrast themselves. The particular institution the agency had in mind was one in

the country, beautifully situated, which offered the advantages of a fine type of boarding school. Another advantage to the twins, it was believed, would be that they would live in different cottages, Kit with a group of boys, Kitty with a group of girls, and that thus the competition between them, which of late had been growing intense, would be relieved.

At the time when the agency workers came to this conclusion, there chanced to be two vacancies in the institution to which they applied. The twins met its requirements, and the government authority which had been paying their board was ready to continue to pay it in the institution. The question of transferring the children was taken up with their parents. Mrs. Scherer's early unhappy experience in an institution made her hesitate, but when she was convinced of the exceptional advantages offered by this one she gave her approval, as did her husband. The only difficulty they foresaw was with regard to visiting the institution was less easily accessible than either foster home had been.

It was June when the decision was reached, so that the children's first experience with the institution might be in its summer camp, a fact which made preparation for the change easier. Kitty was wildly enthusiastic over the prospect, Kit shrinking and on the verge of tears, full of questions as to when he would next see his father. But after their parents' first visit to them in the new setting, the mother wrote "Mr. Scherer and I just got back and are glad to tell you that it is all you said and then some. We never realized that it could be so lovely. Believe it or not, Kit and Kitty love it." And later reports from the institution confirmed this first impression that both children were making a happy adjustment there.

Thus the agency's record of the Scherer twins ends on a cheerful note. What the ultimate outcome for them will be no one of course knows, and speculation seems idle. The preceding narrative covers only the two and a half years which the children spent under the care of the agency, and comment must be restricted to certain aspects of their lives during this period and earlier, together with certain aspects of the behavior and earlier lives of their parents and foster parents.

From the point of view of the child-placing agency, the case of the Scherer twins was a failure. Ordinarily the necessity of moving children a second times does not lead the agency workers to give up hope of making a satisfactory placement. A child of young, vigorous, married parents is seldom accepted for care except in an emergency which seems likely to prove temporary. In this case, the emergency proved to be chronic, and the agency found itself gradually forced to the belief that the parents did not wish to make a home for their children; the evidence furnished by their behavior, past and present, outweighing their protestations of a desire to do so. This belief made it seem useless to continue an arrangement which permitted frequent visiting and a constant reopening of the emotionally disturbing issue of going home.

Thinking back over the history of the twins' two years under the agency's care, one questions whether any other placement might have worked out better than those made.

Children circumstanced like the twins, who are received by a child-placing agency on a temporary basis, are not usually placed with foster parents whose need for the response of a child is such that a strong personal attachment is likely to develop. For this, two reasons are obvious: such attachment often arouses jealousy in the children's own parents, and it

makes the later separation painful for both foster parent and child. Visiting by the parents is especially encouraged in such cases, and everything possible is done to insure that they shall be cordially received in the foster home and that a close relationship between them and their children shall be kept alive or promoted. Foster parents in such cases are to be, if plans work out, only to a limited degree substitute parents; they must function as parents in all practical immediate ways without in any deep sense taking either the father's or mother's place.

With such aims in view, choice of the Kepler home would seem to have been nearly ideal. Happy in one another and in their own baby, this couple had no emotional need of other children and were able to take a detached view of the twins and their parents, while at the same time their good will and intelligent interest in the youngsters' well-being inclined them to play the role assigned them—a role which we may perhaps term semi-professional. If the parents had been ready to take Kit and Kitty home after an emergency period of moderate length, before the Keplers' unforeseeable removal to another part of the country, even the boy's homesickness would have proved an asset; whereas a closer bond with a more emotional type of foster mother might have made readjustment to his own home difficult.

At the time of the transfer to the second home, there was a definite understanding with the parents that they would try to take the children after two months, and the Duntons were informed of this plan. Nevertheless some emphasis was laid, in talk with the prospective foster parents, on the agency's hope that Mr. Dunton would give enough affection to Kitty so that her somewhat aggressive attitudes (believed to be due largely to the parents' preference for her brother) would be

softened. The man's essential unfitness for this role perhaps could not have been anticipated.

A more obvious miscalculation in this placement would seem to have been in regard to parental visits. This home was farther than the Kepler's from the city, and the children's parents expressed, from first mention of its location, their concern at the greater length and expense of the journey involved; also, the Duntons from the beginning voiced objections to frequent visits on the ground that these would interfere with their social engagements. Never once had such an issue been raised in the Kepler home, where the parents had visited more often as time went on; and the frequent mention of it in the record of the second placement may explain some of Mr. and Mrs. Scherer's dissatisfaction with the Dunton home. The fact that they underwent, during this period, what amounted to a forced weaning from the custom of frequent visiting may also have had something to do with their ready acceptance of placement in a rather inaccessible institution.

Rejection of offspring assumes many forms. As is elsewhere noted in this study, Mr. and Mrs. Scherer's rejection of the twins was not absolute; their attitudes were changeable, reflecting feelings which were doubtless highly ambivalent. The first foster mother considered both parents irresponsible, incapable of steady, even behavior toward the children; she believed they didn't want to have the youngsters with them, and on one occasion expressed the hope that Kit and Kitty would not be returned to them. Later she made a point of asking that not too much weight be given to what she had said—she didn't want to be responsible for keeping the children away from their parents; but it was evident that her feeling in the matter had not changed. Of the two, she

of her defiant behavior—which sounds like an experience of rather severe rejection. Mr. Kepler was "outrageously spoiled" by his mother who (by her own account) favored him because he was such a beautiful child and was never consistent in denying him anything, so that he got into the habit of going into tantrums as a means of getting what he wanted. If such early experiences hamper young people in attaining maturity, how was it that these two had arrived at such well-balanced adulthood?

Comparing the two women, one recalls at once that Mrs. Kepler was some fifteen years Mrs. Scherer's senior, had lived through an early, unfortunate marriage, had worked for many years while she brought up her young daughter, and had now been happily married for several more. What she was at twenty-five, how much of her maturity and poise she acquired after that age, one has no means of knowing, but from general observation of people in the process of growing up, this reviewer would suspect that a good part of it was so acquired. An equally important difference between the experiences of the two, probably, is to be found in their earliest years. Mrs. Scherer was only a baby when her parents first left her in a convent, and her mother, during the initial months when she may have cared for the child, apparently showed less than normal maternal tenderness. Mrs. Kepler's first six years, on the other hand, were spent happily with her two parents in a united family group; and by the age of six a child under such conditions has learned a great deal about love. Moreover, her convent experience would seem to have been of an entirely different nature from Mrs. Scherer's, for she states that she grew fond of the Sisters and would have become a Catholic had she not been advised by them to wait till she was older before making up her mind.

considered the father the more irresponsible. The second foster mother saw the matter differently she felt that the father showed more understanding of the twins during visits—he played with them and seemed to enjoy them, whereas the mother was sometimes disagreeable to them—telling Kitty, for example, to “go away” and refusing to read to her—and compared them to one another unwisely in their presence. In office interviews Mrs Scherer usually showed more concern about the children than did her husband, she had been lonely and unhappy as a child, and evidently identified herself with Kit to some extent, while Mr Scherer professed to believe it was a good experience for the youngsters to have to live away from their parents because it “hardened” them.

These differing viewpoints lead back to a question of some interest: what accounts for the irresponsible attitudes and the emotional immaturity of these two young people?

The reports furnished us of their early lives picture the mother as a typical rejected child, the father as a typical spoiled child, she rarely saw her parents, felt herself little loved by them (particularly by her mother), and found no parent substitutes, he was ardently loved and much overprotected by devoted parents. Here we have two of the childhood situations commonly regarded, in mental hygiene circles, as accounting for just such traits in adult life as these parents display. Need we inquire further for causes?

What gives us pause, before coming to such a conclusion, is the fact that, by a curious chance, the first pair of foster parents, who were notably responsible, mature persons, had what sound like parallel experiences in youth. Mrs Kepler was, for several of her early years, in conflict with an unsympathetic stepmother, and at the age of nine was put in a convent because

of her defiant behavior—which sounds like an experience of rather severe rejection. Mr. Kepler was "outrageously spoiled" by his mother who (by her own account) favored him because he was such a beautiful child and was never consistent in denying him anything, so that he got into the habit of going into tantrums as a means of getting what he wanted. If such early experiences hamper young people in attaining maturity, how was it that these two had arrived at such well-balanced adulthood?

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The two men were nearer of an age, and what, in their lives, may account for the striking differences in their behavior as husbands and fathers is by no means obvious.

The picture we are given of Mr. Scherer's childhood is less full than that given for the other three adults; he speaks of his home as a happy one, with older and younger sisters all devoted to one another, to him, and to their parents. One does note that this young man frequently speaks of the possession of money as the most important condition for success in marriage; and remembering that his mother married a second time merely for support, one wonders whether money may have been perhaps to an unusual degree the family god, and whether an example of dependence may have been set the boy.

In a reported interview with Mr. Kepler's mother one finds a number of points which may help to explain her son's recovery from the effects of the "outrageous spoiling" to which she says she subjected him: "She has an exceptionally kindly and understanding attitude toward people and life. . . . She and her husband both tried to teach their children to always consider others. If a person on the street asked a direction, Mr. Kepler wanted his children not only to answer civilly but to go part of the way if necessary. . . . When told that her son had said how much he admired her for keeping them [the children] together, she did not think she had done more than any other mother with whom it was possible. Her mother-in-law helped her. . . . Her husband always said that he did not want his children to be afraid of him, and while he gave a good deal of time to teaching them right and wrong, they were very congenial. . . . They have never been strict in their religious practices. . . . She feels that Mr. Kepler has a right to freedom of thought. . . . He

and his wife are very happy and Mrs. Kepler senior likes to go to their home. Mr. Kepler begs her not to spoil Fran." After telling how she had spoiled her son, the mother adds: "You would never know it now, as he has a very sweet nature."

This last-quoted observation brings us back to the old question of nature versus nurture. Even the most ardent advocate of mental hygiene and the psychological interpretations of human behavior which lie behind it does not, of course, deny that original endowment has much to do with determining personality and conduct. But since practically nothing is known of the laws which govern in this field, and since one never has the opportunity to study a human being whose endowment is wholly unmodified by nurture, there is little to be said on the subject which adds to the sum of human wisdom.<sup>1</sup>

The great danger in falling back upon original nature as an explanation for human differences is that the habit of doing so tends to make us lazy: if everything is settled in advance, why struggle? A similar danger, however, lurks in too slavish an acceptance of the view that nurture explains all. If one assumes that having been a rejected child or a badly spoiled child explains and excuses one's deficiencies in adult life, one is unlikely ever to test out the capacity for self-modification which everyone, in greater or less degree, does possess.

Judging solely from the evidence furnished by this record, the reviewer does not feel that Mr. and Mrs. Scherer need be despaired of as parents. The young wife's desertion of her family was not so completely inexcusable as her husband made it appear at first, and for most of the two years she worked steadily and supported him—not without some bitter

<sup>1</sup> What little the writer could find to say appears in Part I, pages 34-36.

feeling, especially when her relatives in law remarked on "how fortunate it was" that she had a job. She admitted that it was she who had originally urged her husband, in the early days of their marriage, to let her undertake work outside the home, and keenly regretted that she had ever done so. She really seemed to care a good deal about visiting her children, appeared grateful and touched by evidences of special kindness to them on the part of foster mothers and agency workers, and when the possibility of their being adopted was once suggested to her, was moved to tears as she asserted that never would she consent to such a thing.

Mr. Scherer's state appears to this reviewer more serious, he seems to be more indolent, more dependent, and more lacking in emotional depth. He may well be more amiable and affectionate when with the children and a better play fellow, as the second foster mother insisted he was, his happy, indulged childhood would make it easier for him to hand out the small change of love, however much he might be lacking in its higher denominations. Looking toward the future, it seems probable that he will wait till he has a very good job indeed, and has had it for some time, before he will reclaim the twins. His wife will be likely to make the first move or to urge him to make it, since she is eager to give up working, and once she has the children, it is not unlikely that she may grow fonder of them and wiser with them as they grow older and more companionable—as other young women, cold toward their babies, have been known to do.

From this brief excursion into prophecy, the reviewer returns for a final suggestion. Workers in the field of mental hygiene are accustomed to explain adult behavior largely in terms of early childhood experiences, and sometimes, in so doing, classify as "destructive" such early experiences as

those of Mr and Mrs Scherer and Mr and Mrs Kepler, herein detailed This method is applied in cases where unfortunate behavior, regarded as the result of such experiences, appears in later years Might study of other persons who were rejected or spoiled as children, but whose adult behavior is normal or better than average, show that many influences besides these early emotional experiences have a share in shaping young people—among them, the example and admonitions of loved elders?

Certainly some people, somehow, succeed in putting to constructive use experiences which to many of their fellows prove destructive What enables them to do this? An incommunicable gift of nature, or a philosophy, an art, which may be acquired and practiced?

This questioning does not mean that the writer doubts the immeasurable harm done to many boys and girls who are spoiled or rejected But while young parents need to understand the dangers to children from such treatment, they should also understand that if perchance *they* suffered similarly in childhood, they need not regard themselves as hopelessly damaged, for others have survived like experiences and have gained in understanding, sympathy, and self-control through surmounting them

## *Of Handicaps and Growth*

MARY HURD, as she came to the child-placing agency a few days before her thirteenth birthday, did not appear to be a girl concerning whom serious fears need be entertained. She was a rather attractive youngster who for nearly two years had borne an excellent reputation in an institution of good type located in the country. By the officers of this institution she was considered a "well-behaved little lady," by the other children a "smart girl." She was said to be well liked. In school she was a hard, persistent worker, who had skipped a grade and had taken honors. She was ambitious—did not wish to stay in the institution and take the commercial course offered there, but wanted to return to the city, live in a foster home, and attend academic high school with a view to preparing for college. She had appeared, while at the institution, to be fond of her mother, but had no desire to return home to live with her, in fact, was strongly opposed to the idea.

When one reviews the history of the home from which Mary had been removed two years earlier, one is not surprised at the child's aversion to the idea of returning to it. The third in a family of five, she had been accustomed to crowded quarters, dirt, disorder, poor irregular meals, and the constant quarreling of her parents. When she was ten conditions had grown worse, for her father had been ill and (whether before or after this illness is not clear) had developed a form of religious fanaticism which led him, at times, to give up work in order to devote himself exclusively to prayer. He neglected his family responsibilities more and more, at the same time making excessive sexual demands upon his wife.

Unlike her husband, Mrs Hurd was always keenly interested in her children and ambitious for them to become "ladies and gentlemen" During this difficult period she had resort to a family welfare society which gave relief and endeavored to plan with the parents Finally she drove her husband from the home and secured through the court an assignment of part (not quite half) of his wages Since the amount thus obtained was obviously insufficient to support the family, and since the mother's inadequacy as a manager and parent made the home, even with a relief allowance, a most unsatisfactory place in which to grow up, commitment of three of the children was finally arranged This left the eldest son, of working age, and the youngest, also a boy, with the mother

During the year that followed a remarkable transformation was wrought in the home through the efforts of the family society Mrs Hurd, coming under the personal influence of a forceful district supervisor, was induced to accept help in planning her expenditures and to take courses in home management, with the result that she became a comparatively good housekeeper and immensely proud of her neat rooms Before Mary's discharge from the institution the oldest of the three children who had been removed had gone home, so that there were now, with the mother, two big sons and one little one

To this home, which seemed definitely on the up grade, the agencies concerned felt that Mary might well return, but in the face of her strong opposition they were unwilling to force the issue It was therefore decided to place her in a foster home near enough her mother to permit of frequent visiting, in the hope that she would in time, of her own accord, wish to return

The success of any such plan depends largely upon the foster mother's characteristics and the cooperation she gives. The woman with whom it was decided to place Mary was a kindly widow who "had gone through a great deal of hardship in order to bring up her fatherless girls without the aid of an orphan asylum." Her daughters had gone to work as early as possible in order to help keep the home intact, but they were sympathetic with young people who wanted more education than they had been able to have. Mrs. Meller had cared for a number of children for the agency, and had always been in favor of helping children back into their own homes. Her home was simple, attractive, and very clean. She already had two children from the agency, a small brother and sister. The visitor reviewed with her Mary's family situation, explaining the agency's plan which included not only encouraging the girl to return to her own home, but insuring that she should carry with her, when she went, the knowledge that a home need not be wealthy to be attractive.

The plan worked. Mary considered her mother's improvement simply miraculous and after a few months asked her visitor, on her own initiative, whether it would be possible for her to go home. She enjoyed giving her mother new ideas which she picked up in her science class and helping her to speak better English, and the two were becoming good friends. At the end of the school year the transfer was effected. Mother and daughter believed the new arrangement to be a permanent one. Fortunately the family welfare and child-placing agencies had all along regarded it as an experiment, for within four months both were convinced that removal of the girl was imperative.

To understand why this was so, it is necessary to view the family and the girl a little more closely.

During the critical period before the removal of the three children, the family society had arranged for brief study of the father by a psychiatrist. This physician considered the man a constitutional inferior and believed the persistent suspicions of his wife which he entertained to be evidence of a paranoid trend. The mother appeared to all concerned a no less disorganized person, and though her improvement as a housekeeper was indeed remarkable, it was felt by more than one observer to be based to such an extent upon the influence of one strong individual that it was not altogether safely secured.

In Mary herself, as Miss Peters, her visitor, came to know her during the months she spent in the Meller home, certain tendencies that did not make for healthy-mindedness were observed. She was extremely selfish and self-centered, and resented the presence of younger children in the home and any suggestion that she help about the house. She was inclined to withdraw herself and to assume a superior attitude toward "the lower classes." She neither let herself become fully one of the family circle in the foster home nor (for some time) made friends with the girls in the neighborhood: they did not speak correctly, while she imitated the speech of her high school elocution teacher; they were not interested in cultural topics, while she made a point of being, or at least appearing, so. It was not long, however, before Miss Peters observed that the child's real tastes lay along more ordinary lines; she might talk of her interest in poetry but really loved to go to commonplace movies and to read commonplace stories. In conversation with the visitor, who spent much time both in and out of working hours with her, she admitted that she was somehow cold-hearted and could not seem to warm up to people.



However, there was, in the spring, the hopeful fact that Mary wanted to be with her mother. The test of summer months in a small apartment with four other people was recognized to be a severe one, but apparently it had to be made, for the resources of the family plus the relief allowance permitted nothing better. A period at camp was arranged for the girl, and by special understanding with the family society Miss Peters continued to visit her in her mother's home.

Unhappily, Mary's behavior here was as inconsiderate as it had been in the foster home. She took no interest in her young brother or in the management of the household. She scorned to go with any of the neighboring young people, and returned to the former neighborhood or went with school acquaintances, coming home, often, later than her mother thought proper. As they were thrown more together, also, she and her mother got on less well, according to her keen sighted visitor, they were too much alike to get on—both were self-centered and egotistical, and the mother, though anxious for Mary to become a "lady" and have an education, nevertheless became jealous of her as she felt herself outdistanced. In addition, the next older brother proved a stumbling block, he was a violent tempered fellow who often showed a brutal streak, yet he was favored by the mother not only above Mary but above his older and much better balanced brother. There seemed also to be deterioration in the housekeeping—or Mary's visitor happened in when it was at its worst. Finally, the child placing agency acted quickly to end what was rapidly becoming a destructive experience for the girl.

In the foster home where she was next placed Mary made a good adjustment, the foster mother repeatedly stated that

she had no complaints of her, and Mary was also satisfied, at least at first. There were no younger children in the home, the family consisting of a mother and two daughters of working age. Mary got on well not only with them but with their relatives. As time went on she did grow rather envious of a friend who lived in a foster family of a higher cultural level. This friend, whom Mary had known in the institution, was both a more intellectual and a better balanced girl than Mary, and her companionship during this period, despite Mary's envy of her, apparently had a steadying effect upon the girl.

During this year, however, Mary began to lose interest in school and did poor work in several subjects. This development was not surprising to the agency, for psychological study at the institution had indicated that she was of only average intelligence, and her drive for education appeared to be due to a desire for a superior social position rather than to genuine intellectual interests. Believing the girl unfitted for higher education, the agency had nevertheless scrupulously refrained from discouraging her ambitions. Miss Peters had indeed explained that a college course required sacrifices as well as good scholarship, and had repeatedly pointed out to her a tendency on her part to rationalize, find excuses, and take flight from disagreeable realities in daydreams. But these efforts to influence the girl's attitudes had been accompanied by so much warm friendliness and helpfulness in such normal girlish interests as securing attractive clothes, that one never gets the impression of undue pressure. It was quite of her own accord that Mary, shortly before she was fourteen, decided that she had better change to a commercial course so as to be ready for self-support at sixteen. This decision the agency naturally approved.

In the spring following, an interview was arranged for Mary with a psychiatrist who seems to have helped her further toward an understanding of herself. At all events, it was after this that she volunteered one day to her visitor that "for once in her life" she felt quite happy. "In taking inventory of her present state of mind," the visitor found that the girl's happiness was due mainly to three facts: she knew she would not have to return to her mother after she was sixteen, her wardrobe was gradually becoming adequate, and she felt "like a personality" in the foster home. She felt, too, that she was "learning to get along and understand other individuals without permitting their differences to have too serious an effect on her." She had not as yet been able to make friends outside the home, and spent most of her time there or with the girl she had known in the institution. "Since the psychiatric examination, Mary understands that she is not a superior person but . . . just average." She seems to Miss Peters to be much less given to finding excuses for her actions and to be facing reality within herself as well as outside. She continues to visit her mother regularly and they get on much better now that they do not live together.

If the record ended at this point, one would be left with the impression that Mary, at fourteen, was overcoming her difficulties and "adjusting well." Such a supposition would be strengthened by the fact that several times, during this year, she refers back to conversations in which Miss Peters has attempted to give her an understanding of herself, saying that she now understands better than at first what the visitor was driving at. For example, she now sees what Miss Peters meant by the distinction between excuses and real reasons for actions and why she felt it to be important that Mary grasp this distinction.

Unfortunately, within the next few months Mary's foster home was broken up by the death of the daughter who was its chief support, and the visitor who had been Mary's constant friend left the organization to accept a position in a distant city.

The break-up of the foster home came first. When Mary returned from camp to find Alma Seldon in the hospital, gravely ill, and Mrs. Seldon overwhelmed by anxieties, she became depressed and began to wonder whether some other home might not have more to offer her. Miss Peters tried to make her see that she should be tolerant and considerate of the foster mother at this time of great strain and should do what she could to make things easier. How far Mary responded to this challenge is not clear, but the situation was undeniably depressing for a young girl and placement in a temporary home was being considered for her when Alma died.

The home to which Mary was immediately transferred already contained four young people—two daughters of the foster parents and two girls placed by the agency—and was intended only as a temporary abode for the newcomer. Mary liked Mrs. Prentice, and Mrs. Prentice said Mary was a nice girl, though far too introspective. She got on well with the other girls and with relatives of the family who lived in the neighborhood. One of these relatives, a young married sister of the foster mother, took a warm liking to Mary which Mary reciprocated. Presently this young woman, who had a small daughter of her own and had never before considered taking a foster child, asked if Mary might come to live with her. She didn't want anyone else—only Mary.

Mary was enthusiastic over the idea. She felt that she would like living with Mrs. Tennant because her home was so much like Mrs. Prentice's and because Mrs. Tennant

would supervise her clothing, take an interest in her activities, and try to make her happy

The Tennants and their five-year-old daughter occupied a pleasant four-room apartment. Mary declared that she liked little Winifred and would enjoy sharing the child's room—a surprising statement, since only the year before she had objected to the presence of young children in her foster home. Mr. and Mrs. Tennant were a jolly couple, “not exceedingly bright, nor very much concerned with the problems of life”—as Miss Loomis, who was soon to take the place of Miss Peters, put it. She hesitated some time before giving her approval to the proposed transfer, but came to believe that it would be good for Mary to “see two people living happily together without too much introspection.” It was not expected that Mrs. Tennant would “give Mary subtle understanding.” “This will have to be the job of the visitor.”

Of the young couple who thus blithely assumed the role of foster parents to a fourteen-year-old girl, not much is recorded. The husband was evidently a steady worker, for at no time during the next three and a half years is there mention of severe economic stress in the home. Mrs. Tennant's girlhood had been a happy one, and she was happy in her marriage. She had never been “up against” any of the problems that had tormented her foster daughter's childhood.

Mary's first three months in her new home passed happily. Mrs. Tennant fulfilled her promise to take charge of the girl's wardrobe, helped her plan expenditures from her clothing allowance, and showed affection for her. She and her husband urged Mary to go out more, and invited her to go with them to the movies. Mary said she enjoyed all the time she spent with the Tennants, they were jolly and laughed a lot. They made no complaints about the girl,

though Mrs Tennant did say, once, that Mary sometimes went into a mood and acted stubborn

During these months a number of opportunities came to Mary to earn a little money by staying with small children in the evening while their parents went out She enjoyed going into these different homes and began, her visitor says, to evaluate the people she met in them Evidently she "gave satisfaction," for one employer recommended her to another

Just before the end of the school semester, which fell during this period, another worker, Miss Howell, took the place of Miss Loomis temporarily as Mary's visitor

The acquaintance of these two seems to have begun with a visit by both workers to the foster home and a discussion of school plans Mary, it is decided, is to be transferred to a technical high school where she will take a two year commercial course She is already taking commercial subjects in the high school which she has been attending for two years, but it is believed that the other school will give her better training

Miss Howell and Mary then meet at the new school to make arrangements, and afterwards have their first long talk, which ranges over many topics Mary's reading interests, her desire to improve her vocabulary, her interest in a party she is invited to, her apprehension at meeting and dancing with boys She is encouraged to talk freely, and gradually begins to give expression to some of her perplexities One paragraph seems worth quoting

Mary brought up subject of news and said that all one gets in the newspaper are murders and divorces and added, "I wonder why people marry in the first place?" She couldn't understand why people divorce each other if they love each other Mary spoke haltingly, but when visitor spoke nonchalantly about the subject, Mary felt at ease

Visitor pointed out that some people unfortunately make a mistake in choosing their mates and although they think they love each other, their characters do not coincide. Some people are selfish and don't want to give in in order to make the other person happy. Mary was surprised, for in her mind marriage was associated with sex relationship only, and she said that this was one of the reasons she hates her father who abused her mother but did not show any kindness toward her.

She hates her mother too, sometimes, because she puts up with him.<sup>1</sup> Visitor explained that sometimes people acted thus because they didn't know any better because of limited education and inadequate opportunities for finer things in life, and that she must not judge her father harshly. She [Mary] said that when she grew older, she may change her mind and perhaps will even want to live with her mother, but not now. She stated she never conceived of marriage as an arrangement in which companionship, loyalty, unselfishness counted. She added that she realizes now that she oughtn't to judge her parents too harshly.

When she and her friends come together, they sometimes speak of sex, but she hates the idea of marriage. Again visitor pointed out that she shouldn't think of marriage only in such terms, but in terms of friendship as well. Mary said that she will probably change.

Mary is still anxious, it appears, about what will happen when she is sixteen, whether she will have to go back to her mother. She states frankly that she feels inferior and sometimes hates to go with other girls on this account, and so they consider her snobbish. She is coming to realize, she says, that she "is as good as anyone" but still is troubled by self consciousness. She is surprised at feeling so much at ease with the new visitor, and is encouraged to feel still more so.

Soon after this interview, and just before the proposed school transfer took place, occurred an episode which came near to wrecking the friendship between Mary and her new foster mother. Mary disappeared from the home for twenty

<sup>1</sup> At this period her father was occasionally in the home.

four hours and on her return told a story which Mrs. Tennant refused to believe.

As to events immediately preceding the girl's departure, the two concerned were in agreement when the whole matter was threshed out with the visitor after Mary's return. Mary had been going out to do an errand for herself; Mrs. Tennant, who was not feeling well, had asked her to do one for *her* on the way; Mary had refused and had called Mrs. Tennant a "heartless woman"; Mrs. Tennant had lost patience, remarking with some heat that if she had a boarder she would make more money and have less trouble; Mary had finally offered to do the errand, but Mrs. Tennant had declared she didn't care to have things done for her unwillingly; and Mary had gone off feeling herself not wanted in the home and a nuisance to her foster mother.

The account the girl gave of happenings during the next twenty-four hours included an overnight stay with strangers—a man and wife—who took her in when she told them she had run away from home; a day in a public park and museum; and an encounter with a man who first tried to become familiar with her and then, on her resisting, turned her over to the police. This tale the foster mother refused to credit; she scolded and reproached Mary and demanded proof that she was not contaminated.

Miss Howell, throughout this stormy scene, refrained from bringing pressure to bear on Mary to tell the whole truth, endeavored to quiet Mrs. Tennant, and kept steadily in view the need of reconciling these two and enabling them to go on together. To the girl she gave assurance that "a person is not judged by one episode in life but by the sum total of the person's actions," and that she herself was "not a judge but a friend who understands that it is human to make



a mistake " Mary admitted she had made one To the foster mother the visitor pointed out the need of helping Mary forget and begin anew In the end she won out Mary, when the question of transferring her elsewhere was brought up, didn't want to go, and Mrs Tennant agreed to keep her In conversation with the foster mother afterwards, the visitor explained the importance of not harassing Mary with talk of the incident but instead showing confidence in her in order to make it easier for her to readjust

At the conclusion of this episode, which marked the end of Mary's first three months with Mrs Tennant, would her visitor have been surprised if a prophet had arisen to announce that three years later the girl would still be living in the same foster home? One fancies that she would, yet that prophecy would have come true

It is sufficiently evident, at this point, that Mrs Tennant does not rank with other foster mothers whose stories have been told in previous narratives neither in understanding nor in self control is she on a par with them She is warm hearted and kindly, but inexperienced and lacking in breadth of vision Her relation to Mary is more like that of an elder sister than that of a mother This relationship, and the other two angles of the triangle formed by Mary, her foster mother, and her visitor, will bear a somewhat careful scrutiny, as will also Mary's relations with the members of her family These latter, concerning which there is comparatively little material, will be touched upon first

For many months following the interview between Mary and Miss Howell quoted from on page 161, the girl apparently saw no member of her family, and there is no mention in the record of her feelings toward any of them Whether

during this period she talked with either of her visitors about them we do not know, but that they were often in her mind there can be no doubt. A few months after the above-mentioned interview, her mother had a manic attack and was placed in a state hospital for the insane. After some months there she was paroled, improved but not cured, and went to live with an aunt; a condition of her parole being that she should not assume charge of her children. She has been with this aunt three months when Miss Loomis reports, one day in midwinter, that Mary frequently wonders how her mother and father are, but has no desire to see them or any of her family. She is willing to get news of them through the visitor. Miss Loomis, thereupon, passes on to her some items about them including the mother's whereabouts, which evidently Mary had not known before. Though the mother, during the months she was on parole, visited her other children in the foster home which had recently received them (always accompanied by her eldest son), she seems not to have come to see Mary. By spring she was back in the state hospital.

This spring brings Mary to her sixteenth birthday and to increased anxiety over her future, which shows itself in deepened depression. The public authority which has been paying her board refuses to consider doing so longer, though the agency asks an extension on the ground that there is no established family home, that the mother is insane, and that "the girl's own tendencies are such that further care and protection are necessary in order to prevent her mental breakdown." Her relatives are visited, but no one of them has a home fit to receive her. Her father declares he could not possibly live with her—in his opinion she is "as crazy as her mother." Thus the agency becomes her sole reliance; it as-

sumes responsibility for meeting her expenses and continues its supervision.

Mary's feelings toward her father are quite as strong as his toward her—she again declares she hates him, and has a great deal to say, on one occasion, in criticism of her family, "all of whom she considers ne'er-do-wells." This can hardly apply to her younger sister Teresa, who appears never to have presented any behavior problem. This spring Teresa visits Mary. The foster mother likes her and wishes she might come to live with her, too, but Mary absolutely refuses to share her foster home. Agency and foster mother, knowing Mary's intensely jealous nature, acquiesce.

Soon after the sister's visit comes word that Mrs. Hurd has died in the hospital. Miss Loomis breaks the news to Mary, and goes with her to visit her aunt's home where she sees her older brothers. With the eldest Mary has a little private talk, and afterwards tells her visitor that she "did not know he was so nice." Miss Loomis agrees with her that he is "a very fine young man." He seems to be the one member of the family who understands Mary's make-up—her tendency to worry and brood—and who shows a disposition to be helpful. But he never comes to see her, having a deep objection to the idea of foster home care.

Next day the visitor accompanies Mary to the funeral. "Almost hysterical" at first, and self-accusatory later, the girl came through this experience, so far as one can judge, without serious injury. Later she tells both visitor and foster mother that she "almost welcomed" her mother's death: "for on the one hand, it gave her freedom from something, she does not know what; and on the other, she now has tasted 'real sorrow.'" She "feels that foster mother is especially able to sympathize with her and know her grief, for

she lost her mother when she was young also." Mrs. Tennant's warmth and sweetness toward the girl at this time are commented on by the visitor, and a month later the foster mother reports that Mary has been unusually pleasant and thoughtful since her mother's death.

During the year and a half which had now passed since Mary ran away, there had been plenty of occasions when the services of her visitor were needed to clear up difficulties between her and her foster mother; yet with all their disagreements, as soon as matters came to a point where there was talk of the girl's leaving the home, as happened two or three times, a quick reaction on both sides brought the two together again. Moreover, much of the time relations between them were really happy.

Once, early in the period under review, Mary is found by the visitor at home alone. In the course of conversation she is asked what in the home makes it desirable for her. She explains that this is the first home where she has felt she is wanted for herself and is part of the family. The foster mother, coming in later, says Mary is a wonderful girl when she chooses to be.

The more important things that from time to time interfered with a steady maintenance of such good feeling in the home may be briefly sketched without attempting to trace in detail the ups and downs of a fluctuating balance.

One of Mrs. Tennant's early complaints was of Mary's talk about sex, which made her feel that the girl's mind was "full of evil." Mary knew things that *she* didn't know, even after her marriage, and the girl's "utter candor" shocked her. The visitor pointed out that it was natural for an adolescent who was intensely introspective to want to confide in one

toward whom she felt like a younger sister, and that it was much better for Mary to express herself about things that bothered her than to brood over them. Mrs. Tennant might be able to correct some misconceptions the girl had on the subject. The foster mother agreed to try not to attach too great importance to what Mary said, and to be more tolerant.

The next recorded trouble arose from an utterly different cause. Mary, it appeared, had been refusing to go out with other girls or on family picnics to the beach and had insisted on spending her days on the roof, reading. "No amount of coaxing and pleading" by the foster parents would "get her to give up the roof." She didn't see, she told the visitor, why they objected to her staying up there, the fact that a sick woman spent her days there, which apparently had been given by them as a reason, didn't seem to her a good one. In private, the foster mother explained to the visitor that what she really feared was that Mary would "do something rash"—she had been so blue of late. Miss Loomis "tried to make the situation a humorous one" to both Mary and Mrs. Tennant. Did Mary really think the issue of the roof serious enough to leave the home on? No, Mary said, she didn't. She considered the Tennant home an excellent one, but personally she didn't like it, because she had found that to have a good home one must give up oneself, which she did not want to do. "She wants to be let alone and not thought of as a member of the family." Finally, "she agreed to do what was expected of her because she had no alternative." Discussing the matter with Mrs. Tennant, later, the visitor pointed out that it "was imperative for foster mother not to give Mary the impression that she was too much restrained," and urged her not to be stubborn in arguing with Mary. Mrs. Tennant said she and her husband were extremely fond of

Mary and anxious to do what they could for her; "they realize that she needs them badly." A month later the report of a visit reads (in part): "Things seem to have cleared up between Mary and Mrs. Tennant. Mary appeared happy. She and foster mother were going to the beach and they were teasing each other as to the way each acted in the water."

It is the selfishness, inconsiderateness, and ingratitude of the girl, perhaps, that figure most often in the successive minor crises which Mary's visitor is called upon to meet. Twice, during the few months that preceded the death of Mary's mother, these characteristics come up for discussion. Little tasks about the house like ironing the handkerchiefs, small errands outside like buying the bread, which Mary has promised to do, remain undone. Mary's excuses are that she just didn't feel like doing them, or something else came up that she was more interested to do. She agrees, when the visitor talks to her, that it's "rotten" of her to behave so; she will try—will even promise—to be different. Miss Loomis suggests that she make no promise, but think things through for herself and decide on the course of action that will bring her the most satisfaction out of living with people. The fundamental need of being willing to give as well as take, in life, is put to her with all the persuasiveness at her visitor's command. How far Mary gets what she is driving at—the real significance of it—is hard to say.

With the foster mother the visitor's task is different. Generous and kindly herself, Mrs. Tennant can't understand why, after all she and her husband and little girl have done for Mary, Mary can't, once in a while, try to do something for them; why she shouldn't express some gratitude sometimes. Miss Loomis seeks to convince her that it is wiser not to expect gratitude, since to do so is to invite disappointment.

A good many people are incapable of showing gratitude, and in dealing with young people and children it is best to do things for them simply because of their need to have these things done. Mrs. Tennant is frankly unable to accept this point of view completely, she and her family have gone out of their way so much and so often for Mary, she still feels that Mary should sometimes reciprocate.

Despite these recurring difficulties, Miss Loomis frequently notes signs that Mrs. Tennant misses Mary when the girl is away at work or on vacation, and is really fond of her. She also several times notes that "there is a frank, open relationship between the two," so that "Mary is able to express whatever she feels." Mary has "learned to be extremely outspoken and discusses things that bother her with foster mother rather freely." She does not hesitate to criticize Mrs. Tennant, who on the whole takes these often thoughtless criticisms rather well. Soon after the girl's sixteenth birthday the foster mother "admits that in many respects Mary has improved." She agrees with the visitor that "it is ridiculous to expect Mary to become a model individual."

Evidence that Mrs. Tennant's concern about Mary's selfishness and self centeredness was not merely a reflection of her wish to have the girl pay in kind for favors done is furnished on one occasion when she shows the visitor a copy she has found of a letter written by Mary to Teresa, her sister in the institution. In this letter Mary showed concern for Teresa's welfare and expressed a desire to help her have as pleasant a time as possible when she came to visit in the city. The foster mother was "thrilled" with this letter and "cherished the copy", she felt that it showed that Mary "had been aroused to show concern for other people." This episode, as one might anticipate, did not mark the end of Mary's

inconsiderateness, which the foster mother complained about a number of times thereafter

The great test of Mrs Tennant's quality as a foster mother came when Mary was sixteen and a half, and within a few months of graduation from the technical high school. In mid October the girl went off one Sunday morning in high spirits, ostensibly to visit a friend, kissing her foster mother goodbye as usual and telling her to go to the movies with her husband that evening, as planned, since Winifred wasn't afraid to go to sleep alone and she, Mary, would surely be home by ten. She did not return that night or put in an appearance at school next day, and it was learned that she had not been near the friend whom she had said she was going to visit.

On Monday Miss Loomis, notified of the disappearance, visited Mary's relatives and ascertained—without letting them know what had happened—that they had seen nothing of the girl recently. She then notified the bureau of missing persons. Next she visited the school and talked with Mary's teachers. She learned that the girl had been doing fair work and having no known difficulties, one teacher thought her a nice girl, but extremely hard to get at. Only to the dean—a fine person, well liked by the girls—did Miss Loomis tell the whole story. She, it appeared, was not inexperienced in such matters, for already this year several girls in the school had disappeared for a week or so. The dean assured Miss Loomis that should Mary return to school she would be asked no questions, nor would they let her know that they knew anything at all about her. They would, however, immediately notify the agency.

During the next week evidence was twice received that



Mary was wending her way southward: cards postmarked in different cities reached another ward of the agency with whom she was on friendly terms, bringing word that she was "on her way ahead," "everything all right," with the added injunction, "Tell Aunt Sadie not to worry, but don't tell her where I am." The names of the cities from which these cards came were at once passed on to the missing persons bureau, but the sage advice Mary offered was not taken. "Aunt Sadie" worried desperately, and was inclined to reproach the worker for her calmness. Near the end of the week, not satisfied with telephoning daily, she turned up at the office saying she just couldn't stay home waiting for news, so she got out of the house as much as possible. She would give anything to know that Mary was well. Wherever she might be, she was ready, when the girl returned, to take her back if she wished to come, and would do all in her power to make coming back easy.

Finally word came from still another southern city that Mary had given herself up to the police and had been placed in a detention home. She was sorry she had run away and anxious to go home, they reported.

Twenty-four hours later, however, when Miss Loomis met her at the station, the girl was nonchalant and professed to have no regrets. She couldn't see why Aunt Sadie should have worried about her or why the visitor should be glad to see her back. It was evident enough that she was pleased to have been worried about. She needed little encouragement to talk, and for an hour poured forth the story of her adventures: how she had hitch-hiked her way, how one man had taken her to lunch and given her a dollar; how the keeper of a restaurant had arranged for her to stay at a friend's house and had then referred her to another man who, after trying

to persuade her to go home, took up a collection among neighbors for her, how still another person, a woman, had referred her to a job at service which she kept for twenty four hours. No one had been anything but kind to her till, at the very end, a young man who had given her a lift at tempted to assault her. She escaped uninjured, was sufficiently frightened to give herself up to the police, but was now rather pleased to have had the experience as it had satisfied her curiosity about sex to a degree.

All this story was related so spontaneously and in such detail as to convince the listener that it was true. Mary wasn't sorry for anything she had done, hadn't missed anybody, had no apologies to make, she wound up by saying. She did add, however (without any lead from the visitor), that she was certain she would never do anything of the sort again. And now, what would her life from this point on be, she wanted to know?

Encouraged to express her own desires, she launched into a description of the sort of home she would like to live in—an elegant residence, with a personal instructress in etiquette, social poise, ballroom dancing—a private finishing course, as it were. Recognizing this as a dream home, she finally came down to earth sufficiently to say that if the Tennants would take her back, she would be stupid not to go, nobody else, she knew, would take as much interest in her or do as much for her as Aunt Sadie.

Utterly different from that of a year and a half ago was the reception accorded the returned wanderer in the foster home. Mrs. Tennant greeted Mary warmly, asked no questions and tried hard to make no comments, though she couldn't refrain from occasionally letting Mary know that she had caused much worry and upset in the household.

Mary spoke with a gayety that bordered on the hysterical about her trip. Ultimately she told Aunt Sadie the whole story, and the foster mother believed it, as the visitor had

It was on a Friday that Mary came home. On that day she expressed willingness to return to school and listened while the visitor called up the dean, who asked no questions, merely saying that they would be glad to have Mary back again.

On Monday, however, when Miss Loomis again visited the foster home, she found Mary there, she had decided that she didn't want to return to school. Seen alone, the girl asked if her visitor was disappointed in her? She had realized, she said, after thinking it over, that if she went back to school she would have gained nothing by running away. Since nothing else had changed, she wanted at least a change from school. Miss Loomis reminded her of what she herself had said, that she had only three months more of school and then she would be through, and suggested that possibly it was not worth while staying away just so she could have some change, unless she was quite convinced she wanted this kind of change. Maybe Mary would like to go back to school for a while to make sure that she didn't want to finish—and then come to a decision? Mary finally agreed to do this, and next day her visitor went with her to the school. Dean, teacher, and grade adviser all were cordial and asked no questions, and when Miss Loomis left, the girl was "all smiles and gratitude."

Of course, this state of mind didn't hold throughout the three months. Though for some days (according to Mrs. Tennant) Mary's spirits were good, when next seen by her visitor she was in a self-pitying mood. She was going on with school to do everyone a favor, especially Aunt Sadie. Mrs. Tennant felt strongly the importance of the girl's graduat-

ing, failure to do so would be very bad for her, she was sure Mary was terribly impatient to be rid of school, and found it hard to concentrate, especially on home work. Her foster mother had to keep buoying up her spirits. Feeling it essential to "placate" Mary in every possible way, she also bought the girl many little extras, during these months, out of her own slim pocketbook, and when the agency's clothing allowance couldn't be stretched to cover a graduating dress, made her a present of one. Actually, as it turned out, Mary had more of the things dear to a girl's heart, at this time, than many members of her class.

It was in the midst of the depression that Mary graduated, and like thousands of other youngsters the country over, stood "on the threshold of life"—with nowhere to go.

Aunt Sadie, while she had labored to bolster up the girl's morale till she should capture her diploma, had nevertheless looked forward with dread, during these months, to the prospect of having an unemployed Mary on her hands twenty-four hours a day. An entry in the record, of about the date of graduation, reads, in part:

Mrs. Tennant questions more and more why she should keep Mary, who gives her no satisfaction at all and is very much a factor of friction in the household. Mary quarrels with Winifred, is unpleasant to Mr. Tennant who tries hard to be nice to her, and is frequently unkind in her manner of talking to foster mother. Mary recognizes that she causes much unpleasantness in the house. She would like to overcome her own (as she says) "bad disposition," but she cannot do so.

The ceremonies which attended the completion of Mary's school course brought some new angles of observation to her visitor which further emphasized the problem the girl still

represented to the agency. At the class night exercises Mary expressed great envy of other classmates who received popular recognition. At the same time Miss Loomis, meeting two of the girl's teachers with whom she had been working for a year past, learned that both felt she had not improved at all during this period, that she was still "scornful Mary," extremely unpleasant in disposition. Neither of them felt that they had gotten to know her better or had been able to help her overcome her difficulties.

Foster mother and visitor, at this point, were united in the conviction that the one absolute essential to accomplishing anything with Mary or to being able to live with her, was that she be regularly occupied. When left with time on her hands she now, as in the past, brooded a great deal, showed little initiative in finding things to interest herself in, and grew more and more despondent. The worker therefore concentrated upon finding some form of subsidized employment for the girl, and succeeded in securing an opening for her to work four days a week in the office of a museum, the agency to supply a modest salary (\$40 a month) which Mary was to assume came from the museum itself. Another ward of the agency had been doing this work, but had secured regular employment for herself, and Mary now slipped into her place. She was told that the job was temporary, and that she should use her free time in seeking other employment.

Mary at first enjoyed the novelty of the work, then, of course, she began to strike snags. Had difficulty in making friends with the people in the office, made mistakes in taking dictation, and so on. However, the joy she felt in being able to pay her own board and have her own fund for clothing sustained her. Her foster mother tried hard to help her man-

age so that she had more things now that she was working, thus insuring that there was sufficient incentive for continuing on the job. Her work on the whole was satisfactory, according to her immediate chief on the museum staff, though owing to her feeling of inferiority she showed no initiative. At the end of the four months for which arrangements had originally been made the museum held out some hope that it might later be able to take the girl on to its regular staff, and with this prospect in view the period of subsidized employment was extended.

Mary had been working about seven months when she learned, through someone at the museum, that her salary was being paid by the agency. At first she was terribly upset and reproached the foster mother for withholding this information from her. Mrs. Tennant suggested that she talk to the worker about the matter.

During all these months Miss Loomis had kept in close touch with Mary—the fact that the museum and the agency office were in the same neighborhood making this possible. In the conversation which now ensued the visitor explained to the girl that the agency had a special fund to be used, in non-profit-making organizations, to provide work opportunities for young people who needed experience in working to supplement their studies in school; the aim in such cases being to better prepare the boy or girl to obtain gainful employment.

This explanation evidently cleared things up a good deal. Mary's chief, it now appeared, had told her that he was going to ask *his* chief to take her on the staff at a slightly increased salary. Would Miss Loomis go to see the big chief? Maybe it would help, and Mary was so eager for that job!

Miss Loomis went. She was told that there were no funds

available, at present, to pay for another worker. If an opportunity arose, they would consider Mary. . . . For another three months, hoping and despairing by turns, Mary hung on. Toward the end she reported every day for work in the desperate hope of making herself too conspicuously useful to be dispensed with. A date had been set—she was to be notified whether the desired appointment was to be hers. It came—there would be nothing for her after January first.

During these ten months of subsidized employment, though there had been minor disagreements in the foster home, things seem to have gone, on the whole, somewhat better. For one thing, the question of having Mary's sister Teresa come to live with Mary had come to the fore again. Teresa was eager to come, Mrs. Tennant would like to have her; and this time, after thinking the matter over (the decision having been left to her) Mary decided that the advantages of having her sister with her would outweigh the disadvantages. So the transfer was arranged to take place at the end of the school year.

That it did not take place was due not to any backing down on Mary's part, but to pressure from the relatives of the two girls upon Teresa. Mary never visited any of these relatives—her father and brothers, or her aunts. Teresa visited them regularly and was liked by them all. They feared that if Teresa went to live with Mary she would be affected by Mary's attitude and would be weaned away from them.

How were the various persons concerned affected by the failure of this plan? Mrs. Tennant was frankly disappointed—she liked Teresa, and the extra board money would have helped out. How the sisters felt we are not told, but evidently no break took place between them, for some months

later we have the following report—the most encouraging one in many a day:

Mary has matured in many respects. She is much more cognizant of the rights of the foster parents and of her social obligations. She is much more concerned regarding Teresa—as to whether she has friends, or has sufficient funds. When Teresa was at camp, Mary wrote her asking if she needed spending money and sent her some.

Mary, at the same time, is having difficulty in making her money hold out, and after trying to manage things entirely by herself for a month asks the foster mother to take charge of her salary for her and give her an allowance. Later still the foster mother objects to Mary's giving Teresa money—it will be all right for her to do so when she has a regular job, but now she has barely enough to get along on. Doubtless this is true, but for the reviewer the chief interest in this statement lies in the evidence it offers that Mary is really thinking occasionally of others.

It is probably no mere coincidence that three weeks after Mary's job comes to an end she is in trouble again in the foster home. The visitor, summoned in haste, finds her alone there, Mrs. Tennant having gone shopping. Mary tells her that she had been warned repeatedly not to slap Winifred, but had been provoked at the child and had done it again, and now Uncle Harry wants her to leave. Mary supposes the Tennants have been too good to her. Really, though, she slapped Winifred as she would a younger sister. She knows she has brought much unhappiness to the Tennants and supposes the only thing to do is to leave the home. Does she *want* to leave?—Miss Loomis asks. Mary hardly knows. She does know that she never felt before that a home was completely hers. She also knows that she was never considered



"bad" before—neither in the institution nor in the previous foster homes. Maybe this was because she never let herself go in these other places, while here she feels no need for being terribly restrained and good, but is her "own self."

In the midst of this rather interesting bit of self analysis by Mary, Mrs. Tennant came home and remarked that she supposed Mary had told Miss Loomis "what it was all about." She explained that she had to see the worker, because never before had her husband become excited, he had always told her to be easy with Mary and had even stopped her when she scolded the girl. This time, however, he told her he was tired of having their home life disrupted and wanted Mary to go. Probably he would feel better by evening, but his wife wanted to discuss the matter with the visitor so as to have something to tell him when he came home. She felt very bad because she knew Mary was not a happy person, that she was worried over not having a job and hadn't the ability to find things with which to busy herself, also because Mary would find it difficult to adjust to another home. However, of course if Mary wanted to go she should do so. At this point Mary went to prepare tea and the visitor pointed out to Mrs. Tennant that what had occurred had proved to Mary that she had no security in the home, for if it were her own home, her slapping a younger sister might anger the parents but would never lead to her being turned out. Mrs. Tennant agreed, she knew it was wrong to say to Mary that she might have to leave the home—"but you know, Miss Loomis, I would never say this to Mary, nor would Harry, unless Mary had gotten so under our skin that there was nothing else we could do."

Like all the preceding quarrels in this home, this one too was patched up, and both Mary and Mrs. Tennant felt bet

ter when it was agreed that she should stay on. It was very likely true, as Mary remarked to the visitor, that patching things up this time would only mean waiting for the next "bust-up"; but so much of life is just that, and it was largely to successive patchings that Mary owed her three years in this home—which, if much less than ideal, was still, to her feeling, the best she had ever known.

Apart from her assistance in the patching process, Miss Loomis offered Mary, on the day of the visit just discussed, an important constructive suggestion: that she should join an afternoon practice class in stenography and typewriting and so brush up her work and keep herself in shape for the job that might come any day. Mary seized eagerly upon the suggestion, both for the help to her work and because she knew things would go better at home when she was away regularly and busy part of the day. Whatever else is lacking in Mary's make-up it is not a desire for independence or a willingness to exert herself to attain it.

Despite this desire and this willingness, the winter and spring have passed without Mary's being able to obtain a job. In this she is of course but one among a multitude of young people; like thousands of others newly equipped for self-support she has had to accept the means of living from others. Recently, with her eighteenth birthday past, she remarked to her visitor that she was no longer a child and wished she might be referred to some agency which would be interested in her as an adult and especially interested in helping her get work. When the possibility of a reference to the Emergency Relief Bureau was discussed with her she willingly accepted the suggestion because the Bureau would be in a better position than the children's agency to obtain employment for her. The plan actually worked out by the two

services is a cooperative one. Money sufficient to cover rent and food in the foster home is furnished Mary by the Relief Bureau, while the placing agency supplies an allowance to cover carfares and clothing. The visitor continues supervision.

During recent months Mary has repeatedly said that she is very fortunate to be living with the Tennants. Mrs. Tennant is always doing little things for her—Mary could never manage to keep herself suitably clothed, now that she has such big carfare bills, if Aunt Sadie didn't make various things for her—pajamas, for instance, and cotton dresses for summer. Mary is often terribly discouraged, and Mrs. Tennant realizes that a great deal of her irritability is tied up with her unemployment.

What points emerge, demanding comment, from this record of five years' work with an adolescent girl of unstable make up and background?

Of the foster mother who has labored with Mary longer, at close quarters, than anyone else, it was remarked on an earlier page that she was generous and kind, but inexperienced and not of the caliber of other foster mothers who figure in these pages. When, however, one compares her reception of Mary upon the girl's return from her second runaway trip with that after her first, one is struck by a profoundly significant difference. The visitor, when asked how she explained this difference, replied, "She has grown." Mrs. Tennant had known nothing of the darker side of life, its cruel hardships and difficulties and handicaps, till she came to know Mary. With a gradually increasing understanding of the girl and of all she had to overcome in her inheritance, her early environment, her deeply rooted habits of thought

and feeling and drives for satisfaction, have come increasing sympathy and tolerance. Compare this young woman's behavior in the last "bust-up," and in the months that follow, with her behavior during her first year as a foster mother, and you can hardly fail to be impressed by the extent of her growth. Nor can you fail to realize how greatly this growth has been aided by the visitor's interpretations of Mary and her needs. Miss Loomis recently remarked, "We are not kidding ourselves that we have an ideal foster home here." What we have, from the present reviewer's standpoint, is a fair illustration of how an unideal home may render—may be helped to render—valuable service.

When the reviewer originally read this record, some months after the first runaway episode, it was her impression that Mary's best home had been that of Mrs. Seldon, to whom she went after the summer with her own mother, and that if she could have remained in it, under the supervision of her first visitor, she need never have run away or "busted up" as she did from time to time in the Tennant home, but might have gained steadily in maturity and poise.

Any such conclusion would seem, in retrospect, to have been decidedly hasty. For it left out of account Mary's oft-declared preference for her last foster home, with the young, faulty foster mother who nevertheless really cared for her; and it left out of account the increasing turmoil of adolescence. It is possible that from this earlier home Mary wouldn't have run away, that in it she wouldn't have been so disagreeable and made such a nuisance of herself; but it is probable that she would never, in it, have learned to "be so outspoken," to discuss things that bothered her so freely, to criticize and accept criticism—in short, to be so much herself as she came to be in the Tennant home.

Perhaps to "be oneself," when the self is such a conflicted, cantankerous one as Mary's, may not seem a goal the attainment of which is to be desired, even as an intermediate stage in development. But what is the alternative? If virtue, poise, maturity—whatever we may agree to call the social end sought—is to be reached by repressing all the selfishness, the rebellion, the bitterness that an unhappy youngster can feel, then a home which helps her to keep the lid on and to screw it down, to behave decorously no matter how she feels, is the best one for her. But may it not be that talking one's resentments and doubts and fears out, day after day, with a sympathetic and somewhat wiser, if far from all wise, older friend, may prove in the long run a process more conducive to growth toward maturity than keeping the lid on and seething underneath?—Even if the talking out process involves occasional explosions—even if it means "busting up," and being sorry, and starting again? Especially does it seem that this may be true when so many unhappy memories, so many bitter angers and hatreds, so many unattainable desires, struggle for expression as in Mary's case.

It will be remembered that when Mary, just fourteen, was living with Mrs. Seldon and in her first term of commercial work at the academic high school, she was examined by a psychiatrist. She was at this time a good deal bored with her school work, which her visitor characterized as "rather dry," and thought she was doing even less well than did her teacher, who said her work was "about average." The physician found her to be "well kept, not well nourished, somewhat anemic, underweight, but rather attractive personally." "Physically she is at least sixteen years of age, and it is from this standpoint that her future treatment must be considered

. . . There has been no considerable personal morbidity in this child to account for any of the difficulties she may have. Her early home environment was a very poor one. . . . Family feuds and bickerings . . . and every adverse factor."

In conversation, during this examination, the girl appeared to have "no academic interests of any kind"—"no interest in the work whatsoever"—and to see "no purpose in continuing it." The psychiatrist comments also that she "fatigues easily," and "will not persist when difficulties assail her"; that "she has very little affective development, especially . . . in the direction of her family"; that "she is very shut in, makes friends with difficulty, makes unreal conditions into which she recedes and tries to escape from every real difficulty that life presents"; that she "has many pseudo-philosophic attitudes—the nature of which she really does not understand." "She thinks that all males are sordid, that all human relationships are mean, that friends are valueless, and that the world demands too much of her. From every standpoint there seems little doubt that this child is suffering from a constitutional inferiority from which she can easily deteriorate in[to] more definite mental difficulties unless definite mental hygiene conditions can anticipate them." He recommended that no effort be made to reestablish any connection between her and her family, and that supervision be continued over a long period "in order to anticipate more positive mental difficulties."

In view of this unfavorable outlook, Mary's present status, four years later, seems on the whole rather surprisingly hopeful—or would be so if regular employment at a fair rate could be secured for her. Since the runaway episode of less than two years ago she has shown herself, her visitor feels, definitely more stable, and increasingly mature. From

her family, with the exception of her sister, she continues to hold herself aloof. In the words of her visitor, it would be "ridiculous to expect Mary to become a model individual." What one may hope is that, with a chance to earn her way, she may develop into an independent person capable of holding her own through average vicissitudes. If that chance is denied her, if the vicissitudes pile up far beyond average, adverse conditions will have to share with inherent weaknesses responsibility for the outcome.

## *His Father's Son*

"I've done all I'm going to for him. If he's not taken out of my home soon I'll throw him in the street."

Thus spoke the mother of nine-year-old Vincent Elliman, in the office of the child-placing agency: a neatly dressed, respectable-looking young woman with rather a hard face. The mental hygiene clinic at the hospital had advised her to come to the agency; for her own part, she considered a boarding home "too good" for the boy and would prefer to have him sent to an institution.

Applications from parents who want to get rid of their children are no novelty to child-placing agencies, but it is seldom that a mother or father is quite so outspoken in a first interview.

Just what had Vincent done to bring down upon his head such an avalanche of wrath? Or was there some other explanation of the hatred for her son which this woman clearly felt?

The specific complaints which she brought against the boy at this time were numerous: he lied and stole and masturbated; he had a violent temper and was dirty and careless in his habits; he had only reached the second grade, wouldn't study, and seemed incapable of learning. It was the school which had referred her to the mental clinic, and she had been amazed when they told her there that the boy had average intelligence and that he should be placed in a "home for normal children." He had been in *her* home for two years—she and his stepfather had given him every chance; he deserved to be punished for not taking advantage of these chances. She was afraid her home would be broken up, that she would lose



her husband, if something wasn't done. She would talk to her husband and see if he'd be satisfied with a boarding home, or if he insisted on having the boy placed in an institution.

Vincent was "just like his father," her first husband, from whom she had separated when the child was six months old. She had hated the father and she hated his son.

According to his mother Vincent was not at all affectionate, but she quoted him as having said repeatedly, "I am just a bum and nobody cares anything about me."

A month later Mrs. Elliman was in the office again, more rabid than ever against Vincent. Recently he had taken a five dollar bill belonging to his stepfather's sister. He hadn't spent it—just played with it in school. Some of the children told his mother, and then he threw it in the street, where she found it. She was almost hysterical, declaring that she couldn't keep him at home any longer. She said, "I can't kill him for then I'd suffer for it."

As she insisted that she and her husband wanted the boy sent to an institution, the agency explained to her the service offered by an organization which would help her find the right one among those available to Protestant children in the city. At the same time the agency sent to this organization a report covering all it had learned regarding mother and son in the course of its two office interviews with Mrs. Elliman.

The most impressive aspect of this history was the early and complete rejection of the child by his mother. She had given him up as a baby to his paternal grandmother, when she left his father and went to live with her mother. The father was a heavy drinker who worked irregularly and never supported her properly, the grandmother drank too. Vincent lived with this grandmother till she died, when he

was five. He then passed into the hands of one paternal aunt, later into those of another; in all three homes, according to his mother, he was neglected and ill treated, ran wild and saw an extremely seamy side of life. Meanwhile his father died and his mother married again, a man a good deal older than herself, a steady worker in the place where she was employed. This second husband did not know she had a child, but soon learned the fact, for the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children about this time took the boy from his aunt as neglected, placed him in an institution, and notified Mrs. Elliman. The stepfather thereupon urged his wife to take Vincent home and give him a chance—he would bring the boy up as his own, he said. He had now, however (so his wife reported), become thoroughly disgusted with Vincent and insisted that he leave the home.

In talking with the mother, the agency worker tried to lead her to realize that her son's early environment had something to do with his present behavior, but was unable to make the slightest impression upon her.

The worker in the organization to which Mrs. Elliman was now referred expressed doubt whether any institution could be found which would meet Vincent's needs. Some weeks later she referred the case back to the child-placing agency with a letter saying that none of the institutions were willing to receive the boy. A passage quoted by her from a letter she had received from one of these institutions expressed what, she said, was the general opinion: that in an institution you cannot hope to give a child of this type the satisfaction he wants through contact with institution mothers or cottage mothers. Such children have missed so much of their own mother's love and attention at the time when it should have been given that they cannot find a substitute in a person

who has twenty other children to look after; neither can they find satisfaction in contact with children, and they are therefore inclined to the negative role. The organization was unwilling to assume responsibility for placing this boy where his problem could not be suitably dealt with.

Thus refused entrance for her son to any of the city's many Protestant institutions for children, Mrs. Elliman was ready to consider foster home placement. The agency's visitor, calling for the first time at the home, was greeted in friendly fashion, but the mother grew excited as she listed over and over again Vincent's many faults and emphasized the many kindnesses shown him by her and his stepfather. During the visit Vincent came into the room, and upon the visitor's asking him to sit beside her on the couch, did so in a rather cringing way. When, during the conversation, the visitor put out her hand toward him, he ducked and hid his face with his arm. His mother laughed shrilly at this, saying with obvious venom, "He does that because he has been hit so much, and he deserves it too."

During this interview the visitor made an appointment for the stepfather to call at her home the following evening.

Mr. Elliman came as arranged. A slight, short, middle-aged man, very neatly dressed, he was friendly and showed none of the hatred for Vincent which the mother had expressed, though he did speak of his disappointment at the boy's turning out so "rotten." He repeatedly emphasized his fear that the mother might do Vincent some harm if the boy was allowed to stay with her longer. It was really his own fault, he said, that they had gotten into this "mess," for his wife hadn't wanted to take Vincent in the beginning; but when he learned of the boy's existence he felt he ought to do

what he could for him—especially since his wife was resolved to have no more children. He was now quite ready to have Vincent placed in a foster home and would pay a little toward his board, though how long he could continue to do so was doubtful.

Now it happened that the agency at this time was unable to assume responsibility for the board of another child, and since Mr. Elliman could not promise full payment for Vincent it became necessary to take the case into court and ask for the boy's commitment. Here agency and family met with a surprise, for the judge unexpectedly committed Vincent to an institution. He remained in it only a few months, for he begged his mother to take him home and she yielded to his entreaties. In the old surroundings the old pattern of behavior soon reestablished itself, and after a few months Mrs. Elliman was again begging that her son be placed.

A new worker was now assigned by the agency to Vincent's case. The boy, she learned, had never really settled down in the institution or become well known to the staff. He hadn't liked it there, he said; "the supervisors were all right, but there were too many boys." The social worker of the institution had made a follow-up visit in the home after he returned to it, and "for forty-five minutes listened to a tirade against the boy." She was of the opinion that "if ever a child needed a foster home," Vincent was that child.

A visit to his school at this time brought further evidence regarding the mother's attitudes, and interesting confirmation of the clinic's findings regarding the boy's intelligence. Vincent had only recently come to this school, his family having moved into a new neighborhood. The principal, finding him much bigger than the other children in the upper second grade, had talked with him, and though he was doing only

"very average" work had offered him a trial promotion to the third grade. He had responded with alacrity and had shown persistent effort and great improvement under a sympathetic teacher who liked and encouraged him. The principal spoke of the many school moves he had made in past years, and said she had been appalled by the tales he told of early abuse. He had *never criticized his mother to her*, but both she and his teacher had encountered Mrs. Elliman and were deeply impressed by the boy's unfortunate home situation. They had considered enlisting the service of a visiting teacher, and were urgent, when they learned of the agency's interest in the case, that something be done for the boy at once. When the visitor commented on the school's constructive handling of the problem, the principal said, "At least we can give him five happy hours a day with us."

The school's sympathy for Vincent was based chiefly on what they had observed of his mother's behavior toward him. The principal told, for example, of her "dragging him in and reviling him" for getting a black eye, "when she should rather have been saying those things to the bully who gave it to him." Such faults as the boy showed—a tendency to "lie out of things," an occasional act of petty stealing or display of stubbornness—they "made allowances" for "because he had never had a chance." His teacher said he accepted discipline without showing resentment, and did not daydream in class, or seem unhappy, or show unusual restlessness. The whole class was somewhat wild and rough, and he did not stand out as a disciplinary problem.

Fresh from this visit to the school, the agency worker made her first call at the home where she introduced herself to mother and son. Most of the visit was devoted to letting Mrs. Elliman "talk herself out." When the visitor greeted

the boy with comment on the good report she had just received of him at school, his mother broke in, "He may be good at school, but he's impossible at home," and proceeded to catalogue his faults. As soon as she could make an opportunity, the visitor asked him to do an errand for her and, when he had gone, explained to Mrs. Elliman that she had done this deliberately as she did not think it was good for the boy to hear himself discussed. Evidently surprised, Mrs. Elliman fell in with this suggestion to the extent of sending him on an errand herself, but he was present during most of her long tirade and heard her declare that he was just like his father and "would probably end in the gutter." Turning upon him she added, with venom, "That's what you're like, and you'll do something that I'll have to suffer for. If I end in jail it'll be your fault." She further declared, "This is a business proposition. I'll do anything, pay anything I can, to get rid of him."

The interview closed with an agreement on the worker's part to try to find a home for Vincent which would meet his needs. Turning to the boy, she asked him how he would feel about going away for the summer. After a look at his mother he replied, "I'll go." Later, when at her request he accompanied the visitor to the car line, she asked him where, "of all places in the world," he would like best to live. He replied promptly, "At home with my mother."

Further study of Vincent's case in its legal aspects made it evident that court commitment of the boy must again be sought. A careful report was prepared and, in consultation with a court official, a hearing before a particularly sympathetic understanding judge was arranged for on a certain morning. The visitor then sent a letter to prepare Mrs. Elliman, and on the morning set called for her and her son.

She found the mother not dressed for the street and in doubt about going to court, but as ready to talk as ever Vincent, Mrs Elliman said, had fled on hearing of the plan for a hearing, and she doubted if he would be back in time to go. Balked in her plan for immediate action, the visitor abandoned the project and settled down to a long session in which she made scarcely an attempt to guide the mother's monologue.

On this occasion Mrs Elliman was less violent than when last seen and showed less concentration on Vincent's badness. She talked freely of herself, describing with gusto her own bad temper, her wild desire, when aroused, to "strike to hurt," and her subsequent nervousness and "feeling all gone." She expatiated upon her poor health, how she got tired, nervous, and jumpy, and had various symptoms suggestive of early menopause. She had heard that these changes made women sick, nervous, sometimes even crazy. Her mother and one of her sisters had suffered from ovarian tumors at this period. She believed she had some circulatory trouble as she was always cold, even in hot weather. When the visitor asked if she had been given a complete physical examination lately she said no, and paused, adding that it might be a good idea. She hated, however, to spend the money for the fee. Her doctor, she remarked, was an old fogey, she had been going to him for years, he had delivered her of Vincent, had seen her through illnesses—"God, what a history he could give you!"

Mrs Elliman then began to talk of her family: her mother, "a fine, upstanding figure of a woman, never sick a day" till she developed the tumors referred to, who had finally died of heart disease, her father, a big, erect man, always a good provider, kind to her, who had also died sud-

denly, in his seventies. She remarked, "We were a good family. We children never did the wild things Vincent does. But of course he's got bad inheritance. When I see him it's as if I saw the living man before me." She went on to tell how, when the boy was born, her husband was so drunk the doctor had to throw him out of the house. "It meant nothing to him how sick I was."

After a long excursion into the past, of which these notes represent only a few high spots, the mother reverted to Vincent and his badness, but with less virulence of manner. She said, "He has a good side and a bad side. He got promoted in school, and he's nice and quiet when I take him around with me. But the devil is in him." She told of her disgust when she found, upon his return from the institution, that he would have to be entered again in the second grade. She could hardly believe it, she said, when he received the extra promotion; she told him he could never do the work, he'd be left behind. But Vincent replied, "Don't worry, I won't be left behind." Mrs. Elliman told of his assurance with some pride; he could do things when he wanted to, she remarked, and "if he doesn't it's just perverseness."

Again, after a long account of various minor misdeeds of Vincent's, such as tearing down the curtains in the hall and fighting with other children in the house, she interrupted herself to tell with great gusto—eyes snapping, hands gesticulating—about a quarrel she had recently had with another tenant who had spread tales about the boy. She remarked, "Maybe he does do some things, but if I let people talk behind my back he'll get blamed for everything that happens." She had told this woman "to keep her mouth shut or she'd have the police on her" and warned her that her own children weren't so marvellous that she could afford to talk



about Vincent. The woman had been sweet as honey to her ever since, she said.

Back on the subject of Vincent, she told how disappointed she and her husband were—they had hoped to make a man of him, but “the devil in him always cropped up.” She wished he could be away for a year, with someone who knew how to handle him and train him. “Everyone tells me I should overlook what he does, that I must make allowances, that he’s my child and I should love him. I have tried. I keep him clean, and I feed him well. I’ve given him lots of chances. But when I see him so bad I can’t stand it and I ask what I’ve done to have such a bad child. Sometimes I think there’s something the matter with me, because I get so nervous and mad and can’t do anything with him.” She went on to say that she wondered if she was doing right to want to put him away and told how it broke her heart to see him cling to her so.

The worker here remarked that Vincent had gone through a lot of unhappy experiences in his early childhood, that he needed a lot of love and wise guidance to counteract the effect, and that Mrs. Elliman was certainly right to consider seriously what was best for him and for herself. The mother then inquired about foster homes, what they were like, who the people were; and when the worker described foster home care and supervision in some detail, listened carefully and asked pertinent questions. When reference was made to parents visiting in the foster homes she agreed at once that it was better for them to do the visiting, remarking that she wouldn’t want Vincent coming home. The visitor also explained a little of the process of working with parents in preparation for the child’s return to them, to which Mrs. Elliman again agreed with enthusiasm—though, the visitor felt,

with little real understanding. The mother remarked that placement might be a good thing to try for a year; in that time she might get well and be better able to handle Vincent "without getting jumpy."

The worker suggested that Mrs. Elliman would want to talk over with her husband what she and the worker had discussed. Perhaps he would like to ask the worker some questions, in which case she would be glad to see him. In any event after having had time to think about it, the mother could call her and discuss plans.

Mrs. Elliman agreed. She spoke of her husband's objection to having her go through another court experience—the earlier one having been extremely upsetting to her. The worker suggested that he might feel better if he went to court with them. Though at first Mrs. Elliman demurred, later she thought he might take a morning off and do this. Again the last disappointing court experience was gone over, Mrs. Elliman remarking, "You and I come from good homes, we aren't used to treatment like that." The worker compared going to court to an operation one underwent to relieve pain, knowing that while it might prove unpleasant one would be better off afterwards.

In speaking of her husband, Mrs. Elliman said he was a hard-working, quiet man who was always tired at the end of the day and inclined to stay at home evenings. He would sit and read while she almost went crazy with loneliness. She remarked bitterly, "I have no life. We see no one but his sisters, and they aren't so much." She wasn't sorry she had married him, but it wasn't much fun.

Late in the morning Vincent sauntered in nonchalantly, and after greetings, the visitor explained that she had thought of going to court to help him get to camp, as this would make

it cheaper for his mother. She added that they weren't going today, but might later. There was some banter back and forth about his not liking court, and the worker assured him that if they planned to go again they'd tell him beforehand. She then asked to see a rug he had previously told her about weaving in school, and he brought it out with pride, while his mother also showed satisfaction.

Throughout this conversation Mrs. Elliman showed far less hostility toward her son than ever before, even mentioning various good points in him and, upon his return, speaking pleasantly to him.

A fortnight later, at the office, she was again unusually pleasant and reasonable as she announced the decision she and her husband had arrived at to "put Vincent away" for a year or so. She was "about crazy" and couldn't do a thing with her son, she said, this would give her a chance to get back into better health and spirits, and "ought to be good for the boy." The explanations regarding court procedure, boarding care, and supervision previously given her were repeated and amplified, and the worker took up with her in detail the question of how best to enlist Vincent's cooperation and prepare him for the change. She suggested that the mother tell him she was not well and was finding him a place to live for a while, and that one way to help her was by going to court, as then the city would help pay for the place, and that she ask him to be a good sport about it. Mrs. Elliman was dubious—she had advocated just forcing him to go, but when the worker explained the importance of all this preparation of the child's mind from the agency's point of view and offered to come up and explain the details to Vincent, she agreed with enthusiasm—and, rather to the worker's surprise, did actually carry out her share of the plan.

Before this office interview came to an end, the worker led Mrs Elliman back to talk about Vincent, hoping thus to "draw off some of her hostility" toward the boy. There were the usual complaints, some further stories about how she had defended him against anybody who criticized him, and a long account of her relations with his father. He had been a big, good-looking Irishman, he had given her a good time and "treated her like a respectable girl," and while she knew he liked his beer, she had no idea what he would be like after marriage. "I wanted a home but he didn't care a rap." They had quarreled fiercely—Mrs Elliman told with glee of breaking a cut glass vase over his head, cutting him so he couldn't go to work. His family always hated her and she them. She was relieved as the years passed and she didn't become pregnant, and when at last she found herself unexpectedly in this condition and was advised against having an abortion, she declared, "All right, I'll have the damned child and then I'm through." Summing up the situation to the worker she said, "I can't love that boy. I hated his father, I hated his father's people, I hated him before he was born, I've hated him ever since, I hate him now, and I'll always hate him."

After careful preparation, the second hearing, this time before a kindly, competent children's court judge, went off smoothly and Vincent was committed to the child placing agency. Within a day or two he was sent to camp for a three weeks' outing.

During these three weeks the agency carried through two important lines of activity in the interest of Vincent—one, of fundamental, far-reaching importance—the selection of a suitable foster home, the other no less essential if he was to

reach that home and prosper in it—the continued effort to establish a good understanding with his mother. The second line of endeavor will first be touched upon.

Cultivation of cordial relations with Mrs. Elliman was rendered difficult, during these weeks, by the fact that Vincent promptly wrote saying that he didn't like camp and wanted to come home; he complained of the food and of being cold at night. The mother was much upset and only partially reassured by what the worker told her of the agency's past experience with the camp and belief in the reliable physical care it gave. A telephone conversation with the director brought assurance that things were going better, and in an interview shortly before Vincent was to return, worker and mother were able to settle down to a discussion of future plans for him.

Early in this conversation Mrs. Elliman gave it as her opinion that Vincent would "never get on with anyone." He fought with other children, she said, especially younger ones whom he pounded unmercifully, and always sought out older boys as companions. She was suspicious of him on this account, fearing he would imitate these boys and get into evil ways. Questioned by the worker about possible sex experience, she knew of none but said he was a knowing child when she "got him," and was expert at shooting craps, fighting, and swearing. She had been amazed at his wildness, "like a street Indian," and swore she'd "take it out on him," which she did by frequent strappings: "I welted him till he couldn't speak." She told of this with satisfaction, saying she soon got him so he was properly scared of her. "He knows he can't say one word to me or I'll whale him." She complained that all Vincent's bad behavior he kept for home, to spite her. She thought he was complaining about camp to "get her goat."

She anticipated that when he is in a foster home he will be the same way; in an institution he'd be better because they'd be stern and rough with him. The worker here expressed a directly opposed opinion: she and her colleagues didn't think so; "We believe he needs more individual attention than he would get in an institution." Mrs. Elliman accepted this, since the court held the agency responsible.

The worker, however, said she believed Mrs. Elliman was right in thinking Vincent might have difficulty in adjusting in a foster home, and warned the mother that it might be tough on her as he would turn to her if he felt unhappy. The agency would expect her to stick it out, as children usually adjust in the end even if it is hard the first few months. As Mrs. Elliman agreed, the visitor added that she would be working closely with the foster mother in the home, on the one hand, and with the mother on the other, and "between the three of us we can have fair assurance that things will work out eventually." While of course the agency was responsible, its workers would need the mother's help in many ways; what she felt and thought was important, and they would be discussing this with her.

The worker then broached the subject of possible foster homes, describing (vaguely) one which was under consideration for Vincent. Mrs. Elliman showed no unfavorable reaction to its being an hour's trip away in the country; she however expressed some suspicion that any foster home would exploit a child placed in it and put something over on the agency. This the worker denied, telling how well she knew her foster mothers and explaining that they were really like home workers for the agency. She ascertained that Mrs. Elliman (who herself was of German-American background) would have no feeling against a foster mother with a foreign accent;

she did "want the place to be decent" and that was all she cared about. The worker laughed and said Mrs. Elliman mustn't expect too much, that everyone wasn't the housekeeper she was. She went on to tell of the agency's effort to have foster children feel and be a part of the community in which they were living; usually it was better for a child not to be visited by his parents for some time, so that he would have a chance to grow acclimated. Mrs. Elliman agreed vehemently, adding that she wouldn't take Vincent home with her between camp and foster home as he would beg to stay. When she asked about visiting him the worker said this depended upon many things and would be worked out later; she intimated that there would be stated times for visiting with a maximum of one or two visits a month.

Mrs. Elliman then raised the question of clothing for Vincent, saying her husband wouldn't pay for it. The worker explained that it was customary for either the parents or the agency to furnish clothes, and that in this case the agency would be glad to do so. She discussed the question of clothing from the point of view of the agency's desire that the children under its care should not feel different from others in the community.

Toward the end of the conversation the mother expressed the opinion that Vincent would get on best with an older motherly woman, "one who will jolly him along and be affectionate with him" and let him "tag around" and help in the kitchen—something he liked to do. He was good at housework, she said, and made good salads. A young foster mother, she thought, would be too impatient.

The worker told Mrs. Elliman she could help the agency by giving Vincent the idea that she was working closely with it in finding him a home; it was important that he should not

get the idea that he was being punished and put away. He should believe that his mother thought it would help him to have a winter out of town while she was getting in good health again. Mrs. Elliman agreed to write him to this effect.

Having thus done what she could to ease matters for Vincent and to smooth the path of her successor, the worker told Mrs. Elliman that she was leaving the agency and that another worker would be getting in touch with her the following week, this worker would know all about the home chosen and would want to discuss it with her. The mother would be able to talk things over with her as freely as she wished. Mrs. Elliman expressed disappointment and some resentment at this change; she hoped she would "get a good one," "not one of those old sticks." She added that she kept pretty quiet at first and sized up people, either liked or disliked them at once, and then stuck to it. The worker grinned and told her to try, for once, making up her mind ahead of time to like the new worker. Mrs. Elliman smiled back and said that'd be something new for her and she guessed she would.

During this interview Mrs. Elliman's protest against men came out more clearly than before. She complained of her husband's "deadness" and spoke of how disappointed she had been in this marriage. She had expected to be happy, and had been until Mr. Elliman insisted on her taking Vincent home. There had been wrangling ever since. She would like to "walk out on" him now she is "rid of the boy", she was thinking of getting a job so she could have "some life." She also speculated on the fact that her husband was in poor health and might die unexpectedly, then she would be on her own, could work and make her own way. Women have a hard time with men—no rights, no freedom. Whenever she sees a man putting something over on a woman she can



hardly hold back from mixing in. She gives Mr. Elliman what he wants—good housekeeping, meals, and her presence when he is home. He can't complain of her, but it isn't much of a life.

On her way west to take a new job, the worker stopped off at Vincent's camp. From the athletic director who had charge of the boy's cabin she learned that he had asked to go home the second day of his stay, but since then had seemed all right. He mixed chiefly with older boys, had asked to go on an overnight hike and seemed to enjoy it. No sex habits had been noted; he had wet the bed once but nothing was said about it and it hadn't happened again. The athletic director had tried to bring Vincent out by giving him responsibility in his cabin; this he took seriously and carried well. Lately he had shown interest in boxing and was at it all the time. The director suggested that the agency give the youngster a baseball and bat and a pair of boxing gloves when he goes to the foster home, and then "he'll be all right."

Vincent greeted the visitor casually but pleasantly and showed her over the camp. In his cabin there were eleven beds, of which his was the neatest. When the visitor commented on what a good camper he was and said she had heard he was pretty expert around the house and could even cook, he agreed with pride and said he liked housework and cooking a lot. When the worker asked him to give her the low-down on what he liked and didn't like about camp he answered that there were good and bad things about it—it was a good enough camp and he'd like it fine if he didn't have to be away from his mother. He then asked if he could go home when he left camp. As sympathetically as she could, the worker told him no, explaining that his mother wasn't aw-

fully well and wanted him to have a winter out of town while she was getting back into good health and that they were helping her find just the right place for him. He changed the subject abruptly. Later he asked, as abruptly, "Will I see my mother?"—to which the worker replied, "You bet you will." At parting she explained that this would be her goodbye visit and that Miss Ingram was the one who was helping his mother find the new home and who would tell him about it when he got back to the city. At this he fell silent and looked about to burst into tears, so the worker hastily took her departure. She had an opportunity to tell the athletic director that she was afraid Vincent was taking it hard, and he promised to "keep the kid occupied" and try to encourage him.

While the steps that have been sketched were being taken to prepare mother and son for foster home placement, review of available homes with the aim of selecting the best possible "fit" for this particular boy was going on. Certain types were of course ruled out from the start, as homes with young, inexperienced mothers whom Mrs. Elliman wouldn't respect, or young children Vincent might bully. The considerations which pointed the way to the home finally chosen are set down in some detail in the record, and inasmuch as this home has proved highly satisfactory it will be worth while to quote the passage

The agency has had difficulty in finding a foster home which it was felt could give Vincent what he needed, would have sufficient insight into his problems, and at the same time would be able to cope with his mother. It was felt that we should not use a new home as it will be exceedingly important for the foster parents to feel secure with agency and be used to working cooperatively with us. The foster parents should also be secure in their community as Vincent is

likely to quarrel, etc , with the children of neighbors It will be desirable to have the foster parents of middle age as mother will more likely respect them than young foster parents It might even be better to have the foster parents old enough to be grandparents from the mother's point of view Vincent likes and imitates older boys, therefore if we can select a foster home set-up where there are no younger children and desirably an older boy who is a real live boy, and well adjusted in his relation to his own parents, it will be particularly fortunate We would like a foster mother who is a warm, affectionate personality and a foster father who would play a positive role as Vincent has had no man he could really admire in his life, or learn from Vincent, despite the rejection of his mother, has a strong loyalty to her This may be simply because he has known no other kind of a mother and also a desire on his part to be like all other children who have mothers It might, therefore, be that Vincent will reject a foster mother for a while but this is uncertain at the same time as his need for mothering is so great and it does not seem really possible that he can have any deep affection for Mrs Elliman The nationality background of the foster home should not be widely divergent from that of Mrs Elliman She has expressed little interest in the kind of a foster home Vincent should go into in this respect A straight American home, or an American home with a Northern European background would probably be most acceptable to mother

Mother is not really happy with stepfather, at the same time she is afraid that Vincent will break up her marriage and therefore welcomes any solution which takes Vincent out of the home It is felt important not to have mother go to foster home any more than is absolutely necessary To her we can put this on the basis that it will only make her unhappy and her health is such she should not overdo At the same time we can bring Vincent into the office now and then and she can visit with him there If mother insists on going to the foster home visitor will plan to drive her out and stay with her during the visit Furthermore, it seems wiser to have Vincent go straight to the foster home from camp The break has already been made and if he goes home mother may have to be persuaded all over again to let us place Vincent in a private family rather than sending him to an institution which in her heart is the thing she wants

In regard to the location of a foster home, one at a distance would seem best as mother is then less likely to visit. We really do not know Vincent and his interests at this point but he is fond of athletics and a place where there would be "things doing" would help to use his energy. He has shown a liking and ability in boxing at camp and for this reason, we will plan to have a set of boxing gloves waiting for him in the foster home when he arrives. It will be best to let Vincent feel these came from the foster parents.

Foster parents will probably need a good deal of interpretation of Vincent's mother as well as Vincent himself. Mrs. Elliman needs to be critical because anyone who can succeed with Vincent will be a threat to her and will also arouse her guilt over being a bad mother. Visitor can act as a buffer between mother and foster mother trying to smooth the way for both.

The record which begins with this passage is the work of a single experienced worker, Miss Ingram, who for purposes of special study has set down in greater detail than is usual not only the behavior of those with whom she deals—clients and foster family—but her own approaches to them. Methods and motives are alike interpreted in such enlightening fashion that it seems worth while to reproduce several of the more important interviews—with Vincent, his mother, and the foster parents—almost in full.

In her report of her first visit to the foster parents, Miss Ingram includes a brief statement regarding their home, the family itself, and the agency's past experience with them.

The Lindquists live at —, an open suburban neighborhood of modest home owners in a small, plain, two-story frame house similar to several other houses in the street. There is a small yard and hedge in the front, a driveway at the side, and yard and garage in the rear some flowers about and a small lawn. Inside gives a comfortable lived in feeling, although unpretentious and conventional. There is a sun porch across the front, a living-room where the divan and chairs have been covered with rose cre

tonne The dining-room opens off this with an ordinary oak set The kitchen is a conventional one with gas stove, etc Upstairs there are three bedrooms—one used by Mr and Mrs Lindquist, another by their two boys, Fritz and Karl, and third would be Vincent's.

We have known Mr and Mrs Lindquist for about two years and they have had two other boys from agency before, both preschool youngsters with whom they did a very good habit training job They have worked exceedingly well with the agency and we have increased our confidence in them One of the previous children had a difficult father (mental case) They were inclined to be threatened by him until reassured by agency The other child was placed with them pending adoption and one of the most valuable things the Lindquists did was to make it easy for this child to go to his adoptive parents. They were very friendly with adoptive parents and welcomed them in their home

Mr and Mrs Lindquist are plain, middle-class people He is forty, a coast guardsman by occupation, a strong, robust, virile man with a *good deal of force and kindness underneath* Both his boys like and respect him and, according to Mrs. Lindquist, "he only has to look at them and they obey" Mrs Lindquist is a gentle, motherly woman with a *good deal of ready sympathy and a liking for children* They were both at home when we called and as Mrs Lindquist had something to watch on the stove, we all sat in the kitchen and talked Before we left we saw both Fritz and Karl, twelve and fifteen years These are husky, wholesome-looking boys, both seeming to have a free and easy relation to their mother and father

We told Mr and Mrs Lindquist we did not know whether they would be interested in Vincent's problem but we had selected their home especially because we believed they could do the job It would in some ways be more difficult than their previous experiences but we could think of no greater service that could be done and no child who needed what they had to offer more than Vincent It would in some ways not be as satisfying to them as Vincent was older than the boys they had had before Little children often appealed more—at the same time Vincent had suffered more and if we could all straighten him out the satisfaction in accomplishing this would be great We

laid emphasis on this because it had been very easy for Mr and Mrs Lindquist to grow to love these smaller children. As Mr and Mrs Lindquist responded in interest, we told them pretty much the whole story of Vincent's life, the unhappiness of his mother and father together, his mother's dislike of him, his being parcelled out to various relatives, his total lack of care and love, and finally ending up in an institution, then of his mother's remarriage and present trouble. We said we did not know Vincent very well yet and they would soon get to know him better than we did. We described him physically and told of his having a responsive personality and of his improvement when his teacher had shown individual interest in him. We tried to show Mr and Mrs Lindquist the connection between what had happened to Vincent and his behavior, lying, taking things, street language, and nervousness. We realized as we enlisted foster parents' interest in Vincent [that] we aroused a normal reaction on their part to his mother. We then had to interpret his mother, the sufferings she herself had been through, the fact that she was like a child and really needed as much attention as Vincent himself.

Mr and Mrs Lindquist listened closely. Occasionally Mrs Lindquist uttered a sympathetic "Aw." When we had finished she turned to Mr Lindquist and said "What do you think? Shall we give him a chance?" Mr Lindquist replied, "Sure, I'm willing if you are. We could try it anyway and see how it goes." It was agreed it might be best all around to have Vincent feel he was making a visit to them. Mrs Lindquist said, "We'd keep him too if he appreciated a good home." We said Vincent would probably never say "Thank you," that he wasn't old enough to know what appreciation meant but that they would know he appreciated their home by his adjustment and happiness with them. We also said that at first Vincent might not fit in as he would later, he even might say he wanted to go to his mother, etc., but that was only natural and to be expected. Mr and Mrs. Lindquist said they would let certain things go by at first but that their own boys obeyed, helped with chores, going to the store, etc. We said we hoped they would treat Vincent in the same way. Mr Lindquist showed some hesitancy about reprimanding Vincent as they did Fritz and Karl because Vincent was not their child. We ex-

plained that one reason we had selected his home was just because of the good training he had given his own boys and we hoped he would do the same with Vincent—furthermore if he did, it would make Vincent feel he “belonged” more Mrs Lindquist said “He’s never had to touch our boys—they just know he means what he says” We expressed appreciation and admiration for this achievement which showed that Fritz and Karl had confidence in and respect for Mr Lindquist

We asked Mr and Mrs Lindquist to talk over having Vincent come with Fritz and Karl, making them feel we all thought they could help him by being big brothers Later when Karl came in Mr Lindquist said to him, “What do you think of a ten year-old kid?” Karl grinned all over and said “O kay with me”

As we got into this interview we felt more confidence in what the Lindquists would do for Vincent We felt at the same time that much would depend on the appeal of Vincent’s personality and there would be a greater burden on his own response than [in the case of] a younger child It was agreed Mrs Elliman would not visit for at least a month, that we could try to work out the plan of having Vincent see her at the office, and that if she did visit the foster home we would come with her at first This made Mrs Lindquist feel more comfortable

Mr and Mrs Lindquist’s chief value, it seems to us, is in their kindly, human interest They are people of hardly more than grade school education but with rugged, wholesome ideals They are a real family in the sense we feel their solidarity and liking for each other However, we did not feel they were too contained so they could not take in another child They will probably not have any deep or intellectual understanding of behavior but their natural warmth and interest will be one of the chief factors There is the point, too, that a little child would be more to their liking which may be putting a little more responsibility on Vincent than he should have We felt Mrs Elliman would respect Mr Lindquist and if Mrs Lindquist accepts her in a friendly way, Mrs Elliman will like her, too Mrs Lindquist’s home is clean and homelike It is not as immaculate as Mrs Elliman’s apartment For this reason it will be better to let Mrs Lindquist know ahead of time when mother and visitor plan to visit

Before making her first call on Vincent's difficult mother, Miss Ingram prepared the way with a note in which she introduced herself as a friend of the former visitor and said she was looking forward to meeting Mrs Elliman Her account of this first interview follows

Mrs Elliman met us with a broad smile and invited us to come in She had a miserable cold which made it easy for us to turn our full attention to her, asking what she was doing for her cold, suggesting remedies and discussing our own difficulties along the same line She was a gracious and responsive hostess as long as we kept the subject on herself When we then mentioned that we had come to talk over with her a plan for Vincent's going to Mr and Mrs Lindquist's, saying we wished her advice, a hard bitter look came into her face and she poured out a tirade of hatred against Vincent, saying she and Mr Elliman thought an institution would be better for him, that he would "never last in a foster home" and "if I couldn't do anything with him how could anybody else?" We said we knew what a hard time she had had with Vincent and that we weren't sure he would get on in a foster home but that we thought if it were half-way successful it would be because she herself made Vincent feel this was her plan for him We followed this with a long discussion of how she owed herself a rest and freedom from worry and that we would like her to feel relieved and to let us do the worrying She thawed out at this and agreed she should be fair to herself in this way We then described Mr Lindquist as a firm, positive, virile kind of man whose boys respected him and obeyed him Mrs Elliman liked this because he was "stern" We told her he was an American of Danish descent, a coast guardsman by occupation, and had a small two-story modest house We described the neighborhood, the unfinished street, the yard, school, etc Mrs Lindquist, we said, was a friendly woman of affectionate disposition who had two boys of her own, Karl, fifteen, and Fritz twelve, both husky, athletic boys We purposely laid emphasis upon the Lindquists' regular routine for the boys, how they expected them to do chores, run errands, and obey when spoken to We also purposely did not bring out at this time, the love and kindness and good humor in this home as we felt mother's



guilt would be aroused too much. We also said Mrs. Lindquist, although perfectly clean, was not the exceptional housekeeper that mother herself was.

Mother after listening said, "Give it a try." She readily agreed not to visit for a month, saying, "I don't want to go out there now." Feeling that a great deal of any hoped-for success in this case will be keeping mother largely out of the foster home, we said we thought the trip would be too much for her now and that Vincent would probably cry when he first saw her and that would only make her feel worse, that we could let her know when he was coming to the city and she could see him at our office now and then. Furthermore, later we would be glad to drive her out in the Ford, if she wished.

Mother readily agreed to this. We felt underneath that mother and also stepfather really did not want foster home care for Vincent, that already mother's guilt was making her believe no foster mother could get along with him. Mother will not like it if she sees a foster mother succeed and she will not like it if Vincent doesn't get along because then she will have him "on her hands." Our feeling is if Vincent fails to adjust at Mrs. Lindquist's, Mrs. Elliman will say with satisfaction, "I told you so," and then clamor to have him placed in an institution. On the other hand, if we can have Mrs. Lindquist be very friendly to mother and make mother feel she (Mrs. Lindquist) is having a hard time too (but is willing to go on) mother may find so much relief in not having Vincent that she may be encouraged to drop more out of the picture.

We planned with mother for us to meet Vincent at the train the next evening. She said, "I don't want to see him." We then told of his staying at the Franks' near our office over the week end because the Lindquists would be away until then, that we could use this time to get what clothes he might need. Mother then gathered together the clothes he had left at home. They were all clean and in good condition. "Nobody can say I didn't keep him looking right." She was pleased that we were going to get him additional things such as shorts to match a still good coat and shoes.

Mother said she had received two letters from Vincent at camp which she had answered by telling him to "be good." She talked at

length about two boys, sons of a cousin of her mother's, who were such wonderful boys and how devoted to her they were Vincent had been quite jealous of the younger of these two Mother smiled at this. She showed us snapshots of them and then brought out many more of herself, her husband, her sister, and various friends. She was delighted as a child at our picking her out of the groups, on comments about her attractiveness, etc We gathered a little additional back history as she explained the various snapshots Mrs Elliman was one of four girls Two died as children and there is sixteen years difference between Mrs Elliman and her older sister We gathered she is devoted to this sister and is quite worried about her now because she has to have an operation Mrs Elliman said she had a good mother and was devoted to her Mrs Elliman said "I hated my father" He was stern and hard We wondered if her hatred of men did not originate here They lived in comfort The children went through grammar school and Mrs Elliman had many friends and good times when working She "may get a job now if she can" We encouraged this.

She asked about paying board for Vincent They feel they can pay \$2 a week We said we were going to see the clerk at the court, and would try to make as easy an arrangement for her as possible She would prefer to pay the board at our office and we said we would find out if this could be worked out Toward the end of the visit Mrs Elliman grew relaxed She lowered her voice considerably and took on a confidential tone As we left she hung over the banisters bantering good naturedly until we had reached the floor below

Reports of Miss Ingram's first three interviews with Vincent, in which she prepared him for the foster home and introduced him to it, also seem worth giving almost in full

*We met Vincent on his return from camp He came in with a noisy, enthusiastic lot of small boys, most of whom had eager parents waiting for them We had difficulty finding him but readily recognized him from his snapshot He seemed a little confused and had a sad grim expression on his face We put our arms around him, pulling him out of the medley and said 'Hello, Vincent, I knew you*

right away " We said we guessed Mrs H—— [former visitor] had told him about us and that mother had asked us to meet him Vincent then asked if he were going home We said that was just what we wanted to talk to him about and suggested we do this after getting a taxi Due to the crowds and many bundles it was difficult getting a taxi, but Vincent took initiative in locating one Once inside, we told Vincent we had had a long visit with mother yesterday, that she had shown us many pictures of him, etc , that she was not feeling very well and the doctor thought she should take all the rest she could get *for the next few months* We said we had told mother of some friends of ours, Mr and Mrs Lindquist and Fritz and Karl Lindquist, who were hoping he would make a visit to them and that his mother thought it would be a nice thing for him to do Also that we thought he might have a lot of fun with Fritz and Karl who were twelve and fifteen years and fond of baseball, etc Vincent listened attentively, glancing up at us now and then for reassurance He said he thought he might like this and we knew he liked the idea of Fritz and Karl He talked quite freely and spontaneously of camp, saying, "I boxed with a boy fifteen years" and "I went on the overnight hike " We said we had heard how beautifully he kept his cabin, etc , and at this his eyes twinkled Summing up camp all together he said, "I liked it pretty good" but "I'd rather be with my mother " We readily agreed and said we knew he'd be a good sport about not being able to go home today We told him that Mr and Mrs. Lindquist and Fritz and Karl were away until next Tuesday and that until then he was going to stay with Mrs Frank near our office We could then have time to get some special clothes he needed and a bat and baseball too

Vincent accepted everything in a protective, philosophical way He was more responsive than we expected and chattered readily about boxing technique, etc

When we rang the bell at Mrs Frank's, she came to the door and greeted him heartily We left promising to see him in the morning

The next day Vincent was given a physical examination He had gained three pounds at camp, was in good condition

His flat feet had improved due to his having done his exercises. The doctor recommended needed dental work and refraction.

[Later] We made several purchases. Vincent was quite definite in his selection of brown oxfords and white shirts. He grinned with pleasure over these. Later we gave him \$1 which we explained was our present to him for his last birthday, even though we were a little late. With this he bought a ball and bat—the bat was a man's size and weight but he would consider no other. "My mother never bought me nothin' like this" came out unexpectedly. To our "Why?" he just shrugged his shoulders. We ended the day by a trip to a high building which interested him immensely.

Vincent showed a good deal of maturity for a ten-year-old boy. He made no bids for attention, did not complain, and showed a lively interest in all that went on. He was perfectly willing to go back to Mrs. Frank's for the week-end. . . .

On the day set we drove Vincent to Mrs. Lindquist's. Foster mother was standing in the door waiting. She looked fresh in a clean house dress and smiled as we approached. As we called out, "Well, here's our boy" she nodded and said "I've been waiting for him." She helped Vincent with his bundles and put her arm around his shoulders as we went into the house. Everything looked clean and in good order. Vincent opened his bundles to show some of his new clothes which Mrs. Lindquist admired. He also told of camp life. Foster mother then said, "Don't you want to meet Fritz and Karl? They've been waiting for you. They're out in the back yard cleaning the car." Vincent beamed at this and Mrs. Lindquist knocked on the window to the boys. Fritz and Karl then came bursting in good-naturedly and shook hands with Vincent. They then took Vincent out in the yard with them. . . . Foster mother seemed to feel confident that they would get along all right. They are planning an all-day drive . . . for the next day, as foster father is on a vacation and thought Vincent would like this. Foster mother will enter Vincent in school which opens September eleventh and we said we would have his transfer card sent to his new school. Foster mother will also take Vincent to buy his Sunday suit.

As we were about to leave all the boys came rushing in saying that a snake had swallowed a frog out back and they were going to rescue the frog Vincent joined in enthusiastically and as we were driving off he came to the door waving and shouting, "We cut the snake's head off and saved the frog"

Thus far things had gone with remarkable smoothness One surmises that they might have gone far otherwise had Miss Ingram been a person of less tact, skill, and outgoing friendliness The unconscious cooperation of the snake and frog, as well as the deliberate cooperation of the foster family, doubtless had much to do with Vincent's feeling himself so quickly at home as he did, but if he had gone to the foster home unprepared, the result could hardly have been so immediately happy A few days later Mrs Lindquist telephoned that he was getting along all right, he tagged around after Fritz everywhere and they insisted on his doing everything their two boys did, for instance helping with the dishes The foster father liked him Vincent's own state of mind is reflected in a letter he wrote his mother about this time, in which he said "I am all right and I want to stay until next summer"

Now it happened that Mrs Elliman had not only agreed to the suggestion that she should not visit her son till he had been a month in the foster home, she had also remarked to the visitor that she didn't care to know, this first month, where he was Nevertheless, about ten days after Vincent went to the Lindquists' and before the above mentioned letter from him had reached his mother, Miss Ingram received from her a "fiery letter" in which she said, "My husband and I want to know where that boy is" and "he was better off where he was last year" (in the institution)

The visitor went at once to the Elliman home Her account of the interview with Mrs Elliman follows

Mother gave us a black look and motioned in a derogatory way "Come on in" We said we were certainly sorry for our stupid mistake about not sending her Vincent's address sooner She said "I don't care myself but my man got mad When I got your letter [a letter in which the visitor proposed to come to see her the following week and tell her the upshot of an interview at the court] he said 'What do you mean not knowing where your own child is—you're a great one'" Mother's guilt is very great and it has been increased by the attitude of stepfather and various neighbors, all of whom have said, "If you couldn't take care of Vincent, how can anyone else? You gave him a good home" We let mother take her guilt out on us "Her man" thinks still that Vincent should be in an institution

We asked how *she* felt, saying if she wanted him in an institution perhaps we had all better start making plans right away Mother then spoke in bitter terms of institutions She told of her going to see Vincent when he was in the ——— Home [before she took him] Mother said he looked ragged and filthy She didn't like the indifferent woman in charge and told her "in no uncertain terms" what she thought She then turned to Vincent and said "My God, you're a sight Come" With that she "walked out of the place with him" and tried to hide him behind her skirts until she got home Mother liked the institution where he was last year better, but doesn't think much of their school We agreed about advantages of public schools for children and told of the difficulty institutions, especially the large ones, had in individualizing children

Mother asked how Vincent was We told her purposely that foster mother has not had an easy time, that Mr Lindquist had to be strict We emphasized Fritz and Karl more than foster parents and said Vincent seemed to like them We also said foster mother had said Vincent's mother had certainly trained him well At this mother went off into a long account of how she had made Vincent help her with the housework, etc We told of our meeting Vincent at the train She laughed like a child when we related our difficulty in singling him out saying, "I bet he expected me" We said he did and had asked to come home This satisfied mother and she took little interest in his camp experiences She was delighted when we mentioned his good manners and manliness We told mother that Vincent had asked how long he would stay at Mrs Lindquist's and as we did not know

just what to say we had told him several months and maybe until next summer. If Vincent should write her this she would understand. We did this as we felt mother would be threatened and upset when she received Vincent's letter saying he wanted to stay until next summer. Mother accepted this at the time saying, "Well, if she (foster mother) is willing to go on, it's OK with me."

We told of seeing the clerk at court and explained that he said when a judge does not order a parent to pay it means he doesn't think the parent ought to have to pay. Mother was relieved at this and immediately suggested she could buy Vincent a winter overcoat which he will need.

Soon after, Miss Ingram visited the foster home. Here is her account of the visit.

The three boys were at the movies seeing Eddie Cantor. This is a treat foster mother allows on Saturday afternoons if the picture is a suitable one. We had a chance therefore to talk with foster mother alone at first. She immediately said she had had no great trouble with Vincent. When he first came she and Mr. Lindquist explained that they expected to treat him like one of their own boys and they would always do the fair thing with him. He has seemed perfectly happy and tags around after Fritz every place he goes. Fritz has taken a liking to him and foster mother says they are taken for brothers which seems to please both of them. Karl lets him ride his bicycle and every evening the three boys and foster father play marbles and a baseball game. Vincent has great fun at this. His wanting to be an older boy like Fritz and Karl has come out in his request to have long pants. Foster mother has told him that next summer she will get him some "long white ducks" but that knickers will be more becoming to him now. Fritz has also told him this. We were surprised when foster mother said he wanted "blue serge" because Vincent had previously told us his mother thought he "looked like an undertaker in blue." We noticed, however, that Fritz had a blue serge suit. Foster mother says Vincent takes pride in his appearance and has been especially delighted because she starches his shirt collars and showed him how to slick his hair straight back.

His attitude toward his mother has come out indirectly. At first he seemed afraid to ask for a second helping to anything but with encouragement he now has "seconds and thirds." He was not used to sweet cake, saying once, "My mother never made this." He started making his bed immediately and then asked foster mother if he could make hers. She let him the first time, then said she didn't ask Fritz and Karl to do this so couldn't expect it of him. He sleeps in his own bed in a room with Fritz. He wet the bed one night but has not since she cut down on liquids at his evening meal. He has not taken any money but foster mother said "I have not put temptation in his way."

Vincent, Fritz, and Karl help foster mother in doing the dishes every evening. Foster mother washes and the boys take turns drying and putting away. Sometimes they get fooling and one night foster father had to remind them after foster mother had told them to stop. "Say, did you hear what your mother said?" At this the boys calmed down immediately.

Vincent loves his boxing gloves but it has been too warm to box much.

We told foster mother of our intention of driving mother out to see Vincent next week. Said we did not know how she would behave. She might be "uppety and critical" or she might be friendly. We again went over mother's hard life, her feeling of shame at the idea of someone else being able to do for Vincent what she could not. We suggested that foster mother just be her friendly, natural self. If anything did arise we (foster mother and visitor) understood. Foster mother listened closely and said "Sure" several times. She did not seem alarmed at the prospect. She saw the point of having Vincent cleaned up with a fresh shirt, etc.

At this point the three boys came rushing in with vivid accounts of Eddie Cantor's antics. Vincent looked quite blooming. It seemed to us he had gained about two pounds. He looked well groomed as did Fritz and Karl. He strutted about gesticulating and grinning and we had the feeling he was quite at home. Foster father came downstairs and the boys started to tell him about Eddie Cantor all over again. One gets the sense of the nice easy relationship in this family. We noticed that Vincent looked up to Fritz and Karl, both of whom seemed to have taken him in. Karl told us his impression of high school and



then said to us that he thought Vincent might skip a grade at his school later Vincent beamed at this

We told Vincent we were going to drive mother out to see him next week He made no comment about this except "What day?" and then said, "Can I have a wheel?" We said Christmas was coming and that maybe between mother, foster parents, Vincent, and ourselves we would see what we could do

As we were leaving foster mother walked to the porch with us

It is plain to see foster mother at this time is thinking of Vincent staying on indefinitely

On an evening set by the mother, Miss Ingram made her appearance at the Ellimans' apartment

Mrs Elliman was cordial and motioned to us that "her man" was in the front room We went in and were rather surprised at the impression stepfather made He is a slight, frail appearing man with an exceedingly kind face and gentle manner He sat on the edge of his chair in an interested, rather deferential manner while mother sat bolt upright on the divan We first talked of how business was asking Mr Elliman what he thought He talked about the hardness of the American business world, everyone "beating the other fellow to it," how the young supplanted the older men at such an early age nowadays This was all said, not with bitterness but with rather a resigned attitude

He has worked over twenty years in the place he is employed

It is here he met mother Occasionally during his account Mrs Elliman would interrupt, coming to his defense against what she termed the "dirty work" of various members of the firm Frequently she repeated, "They don't know what they've got in him," meaning he was more valuable than all the younger employees put together We agreed sympathetically and brought in how friends of ours had been up against the same kind of thing

Neither Mr nor Mrs Elliman brought up the subject of Vincent until we said we had visited him and the Lindquists last Saturday In answer to their questions as to "how things were going," we said, "Well, pretty good so far Mrs Lindquist says his mother must have

done a good job " We then told of his wanting to make his own bed, helping with the dishes as Fritz and Karl did, running to the store, etc We emphasized these things as mother has prided herself on teaching Vincent to help and Mrs Elliman nodded with approval during the account

Stepfather showed a most sympathetic attitude toward Vincent He was quick to acknowledge the favorable factors and said, "We've tried everything else and it hasn't worked, let's give this a chance " When we told of Vincent going to the movies with Fritz and Karl, he said, "You can't keep a boy tied down, he's got to have freedom A city is no place for Vincent " Mother did not take any issue with stepfather's statements Occasionally she would dramatically relive some of her episodes with Vincent and during these stepfather would smile and chuckle at her, occasionally winking at us Mother has to get rid of a certain amount of venom she feels for Vincent every time we see her She said, "When I see that kid, something inside me shivers " Mr Elliman laughed at this, not so much, we felt, at what she said as the way she said it Mother enjoys being the center of attention and has a keen dramatic sense

We felt, as we were with both Mr and Mrs Elliman, that he was really more feminine than she, also that they were quite fond of each other Stepfather suggested that mother "make some coffee " She set the table, brought out fruit, cake, coffee, etc , and seemed to enjoy entertaining Mr Elliman said, "We don't have many friends, we like to have friends come in " He recounted stories of his early life in England

Before we left we planned with mother to drive her out to see Vincent

One more report demands to be given almost in full—so vividly does it picture the first visit made by mother and worker, together, to the foster home

Mother was dressed up for the occasion in a dark green dress, felt hat to match, and black coat These she had dry cleaned and pressed herself She had a large paper bundle for Vincent with his last year's winter overcoat, a new sweater, several sets of winter underwear,

and a pencil box Mother chattered all the way out, talking mostly of the "hard luck" her sister had had

As we approached the open neighborhood and scattered fields near Mrs Lindquist's, mother said, "Say, this is country, isn't it?" It reminded her of where she used to live When we drove up to the house, mother said it was also like their place At this point, we said in a laughing manner, "Now, don't scare Mrs Lindquist to death about Vincent, will you?" and then more seriously, "We don't want her to feel discouraged" Mother laughed and said, "Leave it to me I know how to behave when I'm out"

Foster mother came to the door looking fresh and clean in a red and white dotted dress We said, "Hello Here is Vincent's mother, Mrs Lindquist—Mrs Elliman" Foster mother behaved most graciously, inviting mother in and smiling good-naturedly Mother smiled back grimly and sat stiffly on the edge of an easy-chair looking around Everything was in immaculate condition We jollied along with foster mother about impersonal subjects at first, then drew her out about Mr Lindquist, Fritz, and Karl Foster mother directed her answers to mother in an outgoing manner She is obviously a real and sincere person She expressed herself in just enough colloquial language and slang to make mother feel at home We noticed mother soon leaned back in her chair and really began to smile and enter into the conversation Foster mother brought up the subject of Vincent, speaking of him in the same tone and manner as she did of Fritz and Karl, telling of their doing things together, the requirements she and Mr Lindquist had about their helping with the dishes, going on errands, doing their homework, and attending movies on Saturday afternoons From mother's expression we judged she approved of foster mother's methods She several times remarked to foster mother, "I hope he's not too much trouble to you," to which foster mother replied, "Oh, no, he's all right, we're getting along fine"

At this point Vincent came in with some groceries he had purchased at the store for foster mother and a bar of chocolate for his mother which we noticed he left on the dining-room table He went up and stood in front of Mrs Elliman with a grin on his face but no other greeting She made no move to kiss Vincent or touch him in any way She looked at him very critically and with an "on your

guard" expression Vincent was spick and span in his play clothes, his hair was slicked back and his shirt freshly starched. He had on a sweater of Fritz's which foster mother had fixed over for him. There were no tears and no request to go home. He went over on the couch next to foster mother and answered his mother's rapid-fire questions. She took the attitude of conducting a trial, asking Vincent if he was being good and saying he "better had," if he was doing his homework and "minding the lady here," all of which Vincent answered with a grin and a simple "Yes." Mother then, having finished, opened her bundle and showed Vincent what she had brought him. He was pleased with the pencil box which he said was like the one "grandma" (Mrs. Lindquist's mother) had bought him. We pointed out, however, that this one had certain different and better features to which Vincent agreed. Foster mother admired the sweater and Vincent put it on to show it off. Foster mother then asked Vincent to go upstairs and get his new suit to show mother. When he had left we mentioned that we had asked Mrs. Lindquist to get this as she could get such good values in a local store. Foster mother spoke of the material, etc., in such a way that one easily saw she knew how to buy. Vincent came down with the suit. It was a double-breasted, dark blue cheviot with two pairs of pants. Mother felt the material approvingly, then warned Vincent to take care of it. As she spoke to Vincent directly she would raise her voice in a threatening manner and several times foster mother looked surprised and a little startled. At these times foster mother looked at us and we reassured her with a smile.

At this point Vincent saw Fritz coming down the street. He went to the door, opened it and called out confidently, "Come on in, Fritz." Mother looked "taken back" and putting her hand on her hip turned and said, "My God, you'd think it was his own home." Fritz met Mrs. Elliman nicely, admired Vincent's pencil box, and behaved very politely. As we were leaving, mother opened her purse and gave both Vincent and Fritz a quarter. Foster mother looked surprised, but made no comment. We held out our hand for a quarter too at which the tenseness of the situation broke. Mrs. Elliman shook hands with foster mother and thanked her. As we were driving off mother said, "There's a real lady for you." We said we were glad she liked

Mrs Lindquist as we were sure Mrs Lindquist liked her Foster mother had told mother to come back any time she wanted to, but first to drop her a line so she'd be sure to be home

We took mother for a soda                      She loosened up considerably and said, to our surprise at this early date, "I can see where she [foster mother] can do more for that kid than I could in a million years" We said mother had in many ways given Vincent a good start and that foster mother, we were sure, would continue with the good work

On the drive back mother became silly and gay, joking like a young girl "I get so fed up with the grind and that man of mine I never have any good times and when I think how I used to be the life of every party" We got today much more the picture of a lonely bored woman

At the date of writing, Vincent has been for twenty months in the Lindquist home without presenting any major problem

In school his record has been consistently good, with A's and B's in most subjects, including conduct, and no complaints of any sort He has been regularly promoted, but is still a year behind his age group There has been talk of an extra promotion, and a psychological examination was planned recently, with a view to finding out if such a promotion was advisable, but has not yet been carried out The foster family and the visitor have consistently encouraged the boy with praise Characteristically, his mother, when asked how she felt about his first month's report, picked the one low mark on it for comment "I noticed he got C in memory work He always was dumb in that," and added, "Aw, that school out there must be a cinch" However, she showed considerable satisfaction in later good reports and marked relief when he got his promotion "Now I haven't anything to worry about"

Regarding Vincent's behavior in the foster home, Mrs. Lindquist's statements to the visitor indicate that he has grown somewhat less easy to manage as the months passed but has never got seriously out of hand. Thus, a month after he came, she says, "He's the kind of boy you have to keep after, but he's not bad. He's a rough-house and into everything, and if you don't keep him within bounds he gets too excited." If she or foster father speak in a firm tone at these times he calms down. . . . Two months later the visitor notes: "As he becomes more used to their home he is harder to discipline." He minds Mr. Lindquist better than foster mother. "She did not sound at all discouraged." He isn't perfect, but he appeals to her, is likable. . . . Three months later (six after placement): Mrs. Lindquist is "only now beginning to realize" what the visitor meant by describing Vincent as difficult. He is a boy who has to be "kept under control or he would run away with you." She thinks he is nervous, that his activity is more than normal for a growing boy; it is impossible for him to sit still. He doesn't like to read or listen to the radio, but enjoys games of a contest nature and out-of-door sports. He is careless about his clothing and she has hard work to keep him presentable. He has done some lying lately to get out of things. They haven't taken this too seriously. When pressed he will admit the truth, but his first impulse is to protect himself. She has told him he doesn't have to lie, that if he will tell the truth he won't be punished. The most effective punishment, they find, is to keep him home from the movies on Saturday afternoons when the three boys usually go together. Mrs. Lindquist ended this report to the visitor with, "Don't worry, I can manage him."

About the end of Vincent's first year in the home Miss Ingram asked the foster parents one day if he was an affection-

ate child. The foster father showed interest in the question, saying Vincent tagged him around whenever he was at home and would do anything for him. "He's a good kid," the man concluded, adding that he believed the youngster had every chance to develop into "a real man." Mrs. Lindquist said Vincent showed his feeling for her not so much by physical demonstration as by bringing her presents and sharing things with her—whereas at first he always kept his possessions to himself.

A later report from the front is somewhat less enthusiastic. The foster mother considers Vincent a hard child to bring up. She goes over much the same list of faults as before: his gift for getting himself dirty in no time, his thoughtlessness as shown by his repeatedly putting his feet up on her chairs, his tendency to lie out of things, make it necessary to watch him constantly. Her sons have refused to take him visiting because he embarrasses them—though he evidently still tags around a lot after Fritz. Once she had reason to suspect him of helping himself to a dime which, in the hunt that ensued, he "found", she had not been sure so had not made an issue of the matter. In general, it was her policy "not to let him get away with" things. She isn't complaining, she assures Miss Ingram—she just wants the visitor to understand how things are, if Vincent should do something more serious she wouldn't want to be criticized for not having told of his minor misdeeds at the time they occurred. She refers—with, one imagines, some reminiscent wistfulness—to the compensations in caring for preschool children, "their need of you."

All through these months, Miss Ingram had followed closely and sympathetically what the foster mother was doing, and had interpreted to her Vincent's bad start in life, his lack of early training, and so on, which meant that she need

not be surprised or disappointed if her efforts failed to bring prompt results. Now, in response to this fear of being held responsible if things should go seriously wrong, she suggests that when a visitor and a foster mother understand each other, such fears are unnecessary. Mrs. Lindquist smiles and relaxes. As to preschool youngsters, "lots of foster mothers can care well for little children, but very few can do what you are doing with a boy as old as Vincent."

Something else Mrs. Lindquist had on her mind at this time—something she had difficulty in expressing. She felt Vincent did not have a deep capacity for caring for anyone—"not even for his mother. He thinks of her as getting him something, that is all." The visitor asked if he was sorry when he hurt her, and she felt he was not—giving as an instance his unconcern when he came in hours late, not long ago, after sitting through a picture a second time, while she had been walking the floor in anxiety and sending her eldest son out to look about the neighborhood for him.

"Not even for his mother" reads oddly, in this connection. During these months Mrs. Elliman visits the foster home several times, bringing gifts—usually practical gifts of clothing—for her son, but never once is she observed to make the slightest demonstration of affection for him. The nearest approach to such a demonstration is when, on one occasion in the office, she greets him with a poke in the stomach and "Hello, monkey face." As though to emphasize the omission of any caress to her son, she once spontaneously and heartily kisses Fritz Lindquist in Vincent's presence. Vincent gives no sign of any reaction to this.

Early that first fall she informs the visitor that her neighbors have been telling her how much better she looks since



Vincent went The visitor says she thinks the mother made a wise decision in having him out of the home Mrs Elliman replies, "I never want him back If that woman for any reason doesn't want to keep him, send him any place you want to I wish he were dead "

By this time Miss Ingram is firmly established in the mother's regard with the status of a personal friend Acceptance of invitations to dinner at the Elliman home and reciprocal invitations to lunch at various stylish tea rooms are as essential to maintenance of this relationship, one gathers, as are the occasional joint visits in the Ford to the foster home Quite definitely the reader comes to feel that without the visitor's steadily maintained focus upon the mother as a person—her health, her past history, whatever topics of interest to her she cares to bring up—without the opportunity this relationship offered her to pour out all her venom unchecked and unreprieved, it would have been impossible to make a success of any plan for her son

The hospitality extended to the mother in the foster home obviously has a great deal to do not only with making the meetings between mother and son go off smoothly but with gradually changing her attitude toward the boy Following her second visit she remarked, "He looks good He is going to be a big man—like his father " Following her third visit, which took place the day after Christmas and featured a second Christmas dinner and exchange of gifts, she "talked all the way back to town of 'the swell time' she had had " Vincent's growth and improved appearance again impressed her, and for the first time she could see that he looked like her side of the family She also remarked that "if Vincent had been with her [meaning foster mother] a long time, he

would have had a real chance " Miss Ingram replied that she thought it was not too late and that all of them together would be able to "bring Vincent through " Another occasion was made of Vincent's birthday in the spring, and we read, "On the way home mother was cheerful and appreciative. She thought the party was nice and spontaneously repeated, 'She can do better with him than I can. He may turn out all right yet.' She added, 'It does me good to get away from the grind.' "

An attempt by the social worker to influence the mother directly occurs this summer. Miss Ingram finds Mrs. Elliman one day cheered by news of Vincent's promotion and in "a quiet, rather receptive mood "

Taking advantage of this we asked if she still thought of his father each time she thought of Vincent, as she used to, and she answered, "Not so much " We said frankly she could help Vincent more than anyone else in this respect, that if she thought of Vincent as just himself and not his father, this would make him feel that he did not have to be like his father. This she accepted readily enough. Toward the end of the interview, as she again talked of Vincent, however, she referred with much feeling to how she used to strap him, how she hated his telling "her man" everything that she did. She accepted our suggestion that Vincent did many of these things to get her attention and we added, "You are a grand person to tease, you know " This she took laughingly. She seems to be able to accept change in Vincent intellectually, but not emotionally.

It is of course not the reviewer's intention to try to convince the reader that this woman's nature was radically changed during the year and a half covered by the record. "I hate men. I hated my father," she says that first fall, and again and again this feeling comes out. In the spring "her

man" falls seriously ill, and though she tends him faithfully and speaks of him as a "good man" she is in constant revolt against being tied to him "He has got me worried What will happen to me if he kicks the bucket?" Again, "I am disgusted First it was the kid, now it's my old man I'm sick of all I have to do What a woman I am for picking men First it was a drunk, now it's this one " If he was going to die, she suggested, "Why didn't he, and get it over with?" One comment on herself has point "I'm half tiger, half woman I'm all for myself I don't bother [with neighbors]" But she goes on "They know I'm decent and I'll help them out, but there's no funny business [sentimentality?] about me" Again she says, "I got my father's bad disposition" It is clear also (as the visitor once comments) that she has an intense love of drama and makes the most in her talk of all her hatreds and revolts

Nevertheless there can be no doubt that, as the foster mother remarks to the visitor that summer, Mrs Ellman nowadays is "gentler and calmer" with Vincent than she was at first "She does not have to yell at him all the time" And it is only fair to note that she continues to give unqualified credit to the foster home for what she sees as her son's improvement, saying again, near Christmas of his second year in it "Sure he's done better out there than he would have done at home" This is true, although she on one occasion criticized the foster mother to Vincent (the nature of her criticism is not stated), and although she several times showed some sensitiveness to criticisms which she evidently imagined Mrs Lindquist might be harboring of her, as once when, after buying Vincent an outfit of new clothes, she remarked, "Now let her [Mrs Lindquist] think I didn't get him enough"

Vincent, for whose benefit all the efforts of agency and foster home are brought into play, is perhaps, at the end, the person in the record with whom one feels least acquainted. Is he, as the foster father says, "a good kid," with a good prospect of growing up into a "real man"? There seems no special reason to doubt it, unless it be the foster mother's comment on his lack of emotional depth, and the facts of his ancestry and early life, which might, theoretically, be supposed to have wrought more serious damage to the growing child than as yet there seems evidence of. Most of the facts available paint him as an average boy who with fair opportunities and influences should grow into an average adult. In view of the wide boundaries of the "average," such a statement means little more than that there appears no basis for anticipating that he will do anything outstanding, either for good or for evil.

What the boy feels for his mother no one knows. Consistently, when the possibility of a choice is suggested, he expresses a preference for living at home with her—until after he spends a few days there, over his second Christmas. No report of any difficulty with him during this visit comes from his mother, but the visitor, invited by her to a party while he was at home, pictures him sitting in a large apron, "with an immobile expression and mummy-like attitude," and adds that his mother "jumped on him whenever he showed an inclination to move." Later Mrs. Elliman tells the visitor how, when she was taking him back, he rushed ahead and rang the bell of the foster home. When Mrs. Lindquist came to the door, he said, "Say, can you take an old man in for the night?" Mrs. Lindquist gave him a hug and called to Mrs. Elliman to come in. Both mother and foster mother thought he was glad to be back, and he himself, when Miss Ingram

asked him how it seemed, replied, "Swell. I have a better time out here. There's nothing to do at home."

The points of view from which this record might be commented upon are numerous, but so clearly is its significance as regards most of them brought out in the quoted passages that discussion by an outsider seems superfluous. Workers in child-placing agencies will have found much to interest them, one feels sure, in the case work of the young leader who here sets down her observations, activities, and reflections. Other professional readers may (like the writer) be impressed with the sheer humanness of her approaches to the various individuals she deals with, her quick adaptability, flexibility, and freedom from judgmental or other set attitudes. Those familiar with mental hygiene as applied in social case work will recognize in her a person familiar with the concepts and theories current in this field, who has had the grace, as she approached each individual client, to drop all thought of formulae and recommended practices and behave like one spontaneous human being to another. When to remember, when and how to forget the lore accumulated through years of study is nowhere, to the writer's knowledge, better illustrated than in this record.

One or two comments on the rejecting mother in the case may perhaps be offered. The reader will have noted the confidence with which Miss Ingram anticipated that this woman, as soon as it became apparent that a *foster mother* was succeeding with her son where *she* had failed, would "need to be critical" of the substitute parent because of the threat to herself from the other's success and her sense of guilt over being a bad mother. This interpretation is in the mental hygiene tradition—all of us react more or less in this way in parallel

situations, we are told. In the best tradition of treatment, also, are the various devices by which the worker eases the mother along in her early reports of how things are going in the foster home. Then comes the first meeting between mother and foster mother, and frankly Miss Ingram records her surprise when Mrs. Elliman comments after it: "There's a real lady for you. . . . I can see where she can do more for that kid than I could in a million years." Once or twice only, in the months that follow, is the worker able to discover a trace of the jealousy that was scheduled to prove the chief obstruction to the work of foster home and agency.

Jealousy or a need to disparage the foster mothers who succeed with their children is so often shown by mothers even of the better sort that it was natural to assume that it would make its appearance in this conspicuously faulty parent and would express itself in crude, aggressive fashion. Instead, instant acknowledgment of the fitness of her successor for the job she herself has fallen down on is voiced by her as frankly as any of her previously expressed feelings of hatred and bitterness.<sup>1</sup>

Of course the extent to which Miss Ingram had won this client's confidence and liking and the care with which she had prepared her to look favorably upon the foster home had a great deal to do with her acceptance of it. Nevertheless one must in fairness attribute part of the happy result to a clear-sighted recognition of superior ability in another woman and a willingness to acknowledge it. *Mrs. Elliman was not in the habit of repressing and dissimulating her rebellious, destructive impulses. Neither does she inhibit expression of a more amiable impulse when she has one. For better or worse, she is*

<sup>1</sup> "She was able to do this because the worker herself became an outlet for her negative feelings." (Worker's comment.)

an outspoken individual who "gets things off her chest" with vigor and dramatic effect. Her drive for self-expression and need for a sympathetic audience constitute a ruling passion, vying for first place with her desire for security and a home.

Future relations between this mother and son invite speculation. Mr. Elliman has not long to live. If his widow secures a job and does not embark on a third matrimonial venture, and if her son can remain away from her a few years longer, it seems to this reviewer not inconceivable that the two may become fairly good friends. Once or twice it is noted in recent reports that she talks to him as to an adult, telling him *all her troubles*. She will always need *someone to rail against*, but bad neighbors and unjust employers may serve to drain off the vials of her wrath and leave her free to make common cause against the world with an adolescent son.

## *Parents—and Parents*

THE Ulsters first applied for a child to board after seeing an advertizement—what is known as a “blind ad”—in their evening paper. They were somewhat skeptical about that ad, they later laughingly admitted, and wrote more to test out its genuineness than with any expectation that they would really acquire a family through it. But when an answer came proposing a visit to their home they were sufficiently intrigued to take the next step. And before many weeks had passed they were embarked on the fascinating adventure of bringing up two youngsters.

Of course, Mrs. Ulster had always loved children. When she was a small girl, her sister said, she used to gather in the neighbors’ toddlers and take care of them for whole afternoons. It had been a terrible blow when she lost her own little daughter fifteen years ago, and a great disappointment that no other children were born to her and her husband. She had gone back to work after the baby’s death, and had not given up outside work till the depression came and there began to be criticisms when husband and wife both held jobs. With only her housework to do she really had time on her hands. Her nephews and nieces were in the home a lot—she loved having them visit during the summer, taking them on picnics to the shore and so on. She missed them when they left, and often wished she had a child or two in the home—“for company, and to keep her busy.”

This future foster mother had grown up in a broken home. Her father had been a hard drinker and an irregular worker, and her mother had separated from him and taken him back several times while the children were small; they used to beg



her to give him another chance, for after all he was their father, though he did drink. Finally, however, the separation was made permanent, the father contributing to the children's support. Their mother had been a jolly, friendly person who made the best of things and always welcomed her children's friends to the home, poor as it was. Altogether, Mrs. Ulster, though she spoke with some bitterness of her father, did not give the impression that life had been hopelessly darkened for her by his failure to play his role adequately. Mr. Ulster had been her first beau and she had married him early. She said, in speaking of him, "Yes, I think I would do it again"—meaning that she would marry him if she had a second chance.

To the investigator who had journeyed out from the city to see Mr. and Mrs. Ulster, they seemed a couple who were well fitted to give some child, or children, the security and happiness the youngsters had missed in a home of their own. Both were in their late thirties. The apartment they occupied, in the upper half of a detached two story house, was a pleasant and homey one, there was plenty of play space all about, their income was adequate for comfortable living, but it was the personalities of the two prospective foster parents which particularly impressed the visitor. After a long talk with them and visits to the family doctor, to Mrs. Ulster's sister, and to several friends, among whom was the owner of a house which the Ulsters had shared for a number of years, she made her report.

Mrs. Ulster, she felt, "was essentially a warm hearted, energetic woman with a great deal of unexpended maternal affection." She was not a woman of much education, as she had not completed grammar school, but a period of ill health in her girlhood, and then the need that she should begin to

earn, perhaps accounted for this. She had been heartbroken over the loss of her one child, and had gone back to work as clerk in the grocery store of which her husband was manager so as to occupy herself. "She is a slight woman of average height and weight . . . vivacious, friendly, outgoing, and in general has an attractive personality. She is very frank and outspoken . . . rather a jolly person, full of energy and fond of outdoor activities . . . quite businesslike . . . not a very deep thinker. . . . She would thoroughly enjoy having children around, and has the somewhat rare ability of being a 'pal' to children as well as being accepted by them as an authority. Children would be a valued addition to this family."

Mr. Ulster impressed the visitor as a thoughtful man, given to reflecting upon his experiences and to analyzing situations and people. His early home had been unhappy, with a father who drank and was abusive, and he had run away when in his teens. Because of this home situation he had gone only a little way in high school, but was definitely a reader and gave the impression of having had more education. He spoke feelingly of misunderstood children, and remarked that one of the most important things is to "teach a child to speak out." The visitor felt that he would make a real contribution to the understanding of children placed in the home, and would emphasize the quieter, more studious side of life to them. "The mutual care and affection of Mr. and Mrs. Ulster and the warm atmosphere of the home would give children a happy feeling about family life. Mrs. Ulster's desire to keep busy seems to come not from an unsatisfied life but from the fact that for a dozen years or more she kept house and carried a full-time job. Naturally, with only one of these jobs she now feels that she has energy to spare. She also wishes to feel that she is earning something

toward 'their bungalow' As both Mr and Mrs Ulster came from broken homes, they would be especially able to understand the possible effects of such situations on children and also on the parents This home is recommended for one or two children of any age or sex Children of average background and no difficult problem are to be preferred in the beginning "

Almost exactly a year before Mrs Ulster wrote in response to the agency's advertizement, a neatly dressed, attractive young woman ten years her junior had called at the office to ask the agency's help in finding a home for her two children, a girl of six and a boy of seven

She had been separated from her husband, Mrs Norton explained, for more than three years Most of that time had been spent by the children in a small denominational institution "down East" Her mother, the children's grandmother, lived in the town where the Home was located She had fallen desperately ill, and Mrs Norton had gone back home to nurse her, taking the youngsters along While there she had learned certain facts which confirmed suspicions she'd had as to her husband's infidelity, and had decided to place the children in the Home and earn her own living The marriage had been a mistake, anyway—they had been quarreling for years, she ought never to have married him

It came about in this way she and her mother were living together in the city, working in a department store, when they met Mr Norton He had a business of his own in those days, and was making good money, but the principal thing that made her mother like him was that he came from down East, near their own old home, and her mother knew who his folks were—good substantial people There were other

fellows that *she* liked just as well, but her mother didn't think much of them and favored Norton, so she had married him. She was very young—didn't really know her own mind. They got on fairly well for a while—then the quarreling began.

When she placed the children in the Home, Mr. Norton agreed and sent her money to pay for them there. Then her mother died, and she told him she wasn't coming back to live with him, and he sent the money direct to the Home. She came down to the city and got work. She didn't even know her husband's home address, but she was sure he was living somewhere in the city with another woman. When she had anything to say to him she did it through his lawyer. He was furious at her for taking the children away from the Home—she had done it without consulting him—and refused to let her have any money until she returned them. She wouldn't do that—it was too far away, she couldn't afford to go up often and the children were being weaned from her. Why, the matron had even told her she ought to let them be adopted! She would never consent to that—they were her children and she loved them.

But she couldn't have them with her; she wasn't making enough, and she was away at work all day. Her husband wanted a divorce, but she didn't know—he might want the children part of the year, and that would be bad for the children; he wasn't a fit person to care for them. She'd consent to their going to his parents for the summer—though she didn't like her mother-in-law—but that was as far as she'd go.

Her own people? She had one older brother that she was fond of—married, had a big family, was living in the old home town; he wasn't making much. Her father was alive, but she'd have nothing to do with him: he ill-treated her

mother, always drank heavily; finally her mother left him; and now he'd gone and remarried—a woman Mrs. Norton couldn't endure—and they said he had reformed! Neither she nor her brother ever wanted to see him again.

The agency's worker listened sympathetically to Mrs. Norton, told her of an institution that would care for the children temporarily, and expressed willingness to help her find a home for them if she would first come to an agreement with her husband as to their support.

To accomplish this had taken several months. Mr. Norton had been furious not only with his wife but with the agency, which he felt was butting in and taking sides with her. His lawyer had done what he could to help bring about an understanding, making clear to Mr. Norton the inescapability of his obligation for the children and the certainty that if their mother took the case to court he would be forced to pay for them in a home of her choosing. It was only gradually, however, that the man's antagonism toward the agency subsided and he came to realize that it had only one interest in his family: to promote the well-being of the children.

Long before their father was fully reconciled to the idea, the children had been placed in a foster home and he had agreed to pay a regular weekly stipend which nearly covered their board, and to be responsible for expenses incurred in caring for their health; their mother was to clothe them and pay the balance of the board bill. This program they had faithfully carried out for the eight remaining months of that school year. But in their contacts with the agency workers the bitter enmity felt by them for one another had again and again shown itself. This enmity came to fuller expression as the end of the school year approached, and with it the date

when, according to the plan agreed upon, the children were to go to their paternal grandparents for the summer.

Mrs. Norton, though she had accepted this plan in the fall, now fought it tooth and nail, bringing forward such arguments as that the grandparents had never been fond of the children, that they would not provide a suitable diet with fresh vegetables for them, that the farmhouse lacked sanitary conveniences; and, in a last effort, that she was sure the grandmother was suffering from tuberculosis—though she had to admit she had no proof of this. The agency had assured itself through independent sources of the good standing and character of the grandparents, the suitability of their home, and the welcome the children would receive there, and believed it would be well for the youngsters to have a closer connection with their own people; it also knew that Mr. Norton was determined to have the visit made. The worker therefore stood firm. When Mrs. Norton realized that she was expected to abide by her agreement she gave in, but expressed bitter resentment toward her husband and his parents, saying "I'll find some way to get even with them!"—and again, "If I thought the children were old enough to understand, I'd tell them to make all the trouble they can up there this summer." She further insisted that if Mr. Norton was not going to have to pay board for the children during the summer, *she* wouldn't provide summer clothing for them. Nothing the worker could say at that time would change her, and her stand had to be reported to her husband who in turn expressed resentment and anger. It is not surprising that with all this bitterness in the air, Edith should have said of her father, that spring, "I don't like him because mother doesn't."

The foster home in which Edith and Harry spent their first year had at first seemed a good one: the children ap-

peared well cared for and happy, their mother was satisfied, their father made no complaint. As time went on, however, various defects came to light. The foster mother was too easy with the children and didn't hold them to small tasks she had assigned to them—partly because she pitied them, partly because she was sensitive to the opinions of her neighbors. If, for example, Edith, urged by a small friend to come out to play, stood in the doorway and shouted, "I can't come until my work is done!" Mrs. Vicks was embarrassed, fearing people would think she was imposing on the child. She also lacked initiative and independence, even referring to the visitor such trivial questions as whether the children's hair needed cutting—and yet at the same time she resented supervision. It happened occasionally that the visitor found she had gone away for the afternoon leaving the children without anyone to admit them to the house and see to them on their return from school. Most serious of all, she permitted herself to be prejudiced by the mother against the father and his parents, supported Mrs. Norton in the whole controversy, and because of her own personal interest in keeping the children in her home threw the weight of her influence against the summer plans. Small wonder that the children reached the point of declaring that they wouldn't go to see their grandparents!

Before the date set for their departure, the agency workers had succeeded in somewhat softening the attitudes of mother and foster mother and in reconciling the youngsters to the proposed visit. But by this time further use of the foster home was regarded as out of the question.

Thus it was that, in the fall, almost a year after they first assumed responsibility for Edith and Harry Norton, the agency was again seeking a home for them.

The conclusion to re-place the children in a boarding home had not been reached without threshing over with both parents other possibilities. Could not the mother arrange to have them with her? She did hope to do this some day, she said, but couldn't manage it this year; she was planning to take a business course in the evening, and there were other reasons—beside the obvious ones of limited earning capacity and absence at work: she expected to marry when she got her divorce, and thought it better to leave the children in a boarding home till this necessary preliminary step had been taken. The agency worker who interviewed her felt that with all her protestations of affection for the children she was definitely rejecting them. She did not want them with her.

Mr. Norton was relieved that his wife didn't want to take the children—he would prevent this if he could—they would be better off in a foster home. According to him, she had always neglected the children. He demanded a definite assurance that once they were placed she would leave them in the boarding home till the end of the school year. For her project of evening study he had only scorn. Naturally, he was given no opportunity to comment on her plans for remarriage.

In reviewing possible homes for the little Nortons, many points had to be kept in mind. After their summer in the country they were rosy-cheeked and plump, and seemed to the matron of the receiving home who had them under her care "perfectly normal children," who played well with the other youngsters there. With the visitor they talked freely and happily about their summer. They were enthusiastic about the drive down with their father. Edith said she had "loved everything" at the farm, even helping wipe the dishes. She talked about her father, mother, grandparents, and uncle



as though she were equally fond of them all—an attitude in marked contrast to that of the spring before. Harry stated that he had learned to ride horses and help about the farm; he loved dogs and cats, and specially kittens, 'cause they were so little. They both wished the other children in the reception home would go away!—and the one point they seemed most pleased to learn in regard to their future foster home was that they would be the only children in it. They got on well together, with no more than an ordinary amount of bickering.

In all this there was *nothing* to indicate any serious problems, nor had any come to light in the previous foster home. To be sure, both children had done rather poorly in school. They had not been given any psychometric tests, but the principal had thought their slight backwardness probably due to a poor school start at the institution. It had also been noted that they were both inclined to be lazy, and that Harry evidently wanted to be the center of attention and didn't care so much how he achieved this distinction. In this connection, the agency workers did not forget Mrs. Norton's statement that she was fonder of her daughter than of her son. She had also asserted that her husband had shown his preference for Edith strongly—for example, kissing her goodbye and at the same time refusing to kiss Harry, on the ground that he wanted to make a man of the boy and that the mother was babying him. This must have been when Harry was little more than a baby, since the parents had separated when he was three years old. On the whole, though there was room for endless speculation as to the future development of these children, *there* was nothing to indicate that the task of the foster parents who were to care for them would be an especially difficult one.

The foster parents, however, would have another respon-

sibility: that of receiving the parents when they came, separately, to visit the children. The agency had placed many children whose parents were at war, and well knew the pitfalls presented by such a situation. To be able to give a high type of care to children calls for many fine traits and skills; a different range of qualities is needed when parents-in-conflict; jealous of one another's prerogatives and disposed to use their children in the battle against one another, are to be made welcome. Moreover, few children, even those "perfectly normal" to start with, can be subjected to the emotional strains resulting from such a conflict of loyalties without showing some ill effects.

Among the many tried and trusted foster homes on the agency's roster which might have met the needs of the Norton family, not one was available, at the particular date when one was needed for them: each had its child or quota of children. Under these circumstances it became necessary to consider a home that had not yet been tested out. Fortunately, one only recently accepted for use seemed to possess exactly the qualifications sought. It was decided that the visitor who was to have the Norton children under her supervision should make the acquaintance of Mr. and Mrs. Ulster and talk over with them the problems they would probably be called upon to meet if these youngsters should be placed with them.

In planning to use this home the agency had a double goal in view. *On the one hand, it hoped to be able to arrange with the mother to take the children home within a year.* However, it felt rather definitely that this mother did not really want to have her children with her, and that they would very likely have to grow up apart from both their parents. It therefore wished to select a home where they could put down

roots, in so far as the mother's visiting would allow. It also felt that their father should be encouraged to visit and play a more important role in their lives—he had gone only twice to the first foster home. The question of placing them in an institution had been considered, but neither parent wished this, and the good progress made by both children during the previous year, even under conditions that were far from ideal, seemed to indicate that a continuance of foster home care was desirable.

It so happened that Miss Hart, the visitor who was to undertake responsibility for Edith and Harry, had never met either of their parents. She was, however, familiar with the family's record and knew that Mr. Norton had a violent temper and that it had been difficult to convince him that he would receive fair treatment from an agency of his wife's choosing. She therefore decided to see him first, before meeting Mrs. Norton, and try to establish a good working basis for future relations with him.

He kept the proposed appointment at the office, and, she thought, seemed rather bashful when introduced to her. However, he quickly opened up with talk of the good times Edith and Harry had enjoyed with their grandparents. He had hoped at one time that his parents would be able to take the children to live with them, but now felt that his mother was getting too old and feeble to give them proper care. Miss Hart then began to tell him of the home the agency had in view for the children. She wanted to be sure of his approval before actually making the placement, she explained. He thought the home sounded fine. Then, as he did not mention his wife, the visitor rather casually remarked that she had not yet met her. He seemed very much surprised. He talked,

before leaving, of the way the cost of living had been coming down, and asked if he could not lessen his weekly payment for the children's board. He was told that the agency had not as yet reduced its payment of board to any foster home.

In reflecting upon this interview, the visitor felt that the father took considerable pride in the substantial sum he was paying for his children, even though he found it hard to meet the payments. However, she also felt that he took an interest in his children chiefly to spite their mother, this attitude appearing clearly in his unwillingness to let her have them with her—though he well knew that any court would give them into her custody. . . . *Her* spite against him and his parents was again expressed when she came to the office to look over the clothing the children had brought back with them. She had been unable to find anything wrong with the children themselves, but she was vigorous in her scorn for various half-worn garments, and promptly took Edith and Harry out with her on a shopping expedition. Toward the new visitor she was friendly.

Having thus made the acquaintance of the children and their parents, Miss Hart next traveled down to the pleasant suburban town where Mr. and Mrs. Ulster lived. Her responsibility was a somewhat different one from that of the first visitor to the home: while naturally she would be interested in everything which might bear on their fitness to be foster parents to any child, it was the suitability of their home for the young Nortons in particular that concerned her, and the preparation of the Ulsters for the task before them. Since she would be visiting their home at frequent intervals for an indefinite period, it was important, also, that she establish friendly working relations with the foster parents.

roots, in so far as the mother's visiting would allow. It also felt that their father should be encouraged to visit and play a more important role in their lives—he had gone only twice to the first foster home. The question of placing them in an institution had been considered, but neither parent wished this, and the good progress made by both children during the previous year, even under conditions that were far from ideal, seemed to indicate that a continuance of foster home care was desirable.

It so happened that Miss Hart, the visitor who was to undertake responsibility for Edith and Harry, had never met either of their parents. She was, however, familiar with the family's record and knew that Mr. Norton had a violent temper and that it had been difficult to convince him that he would receive fair treatment from an agency of his wife's choosing. She therefore decided to see him first, before meeting Mrs. Norton, and try to establish a good working basis for future relations with him.

He kept the proposed appointment at the office, and, she thought, seemed rather bashful when introduced to her. However, he quickly opened up with talk of the good times Edith and Harry had enjoyed with their grandparents. He had hoped at one time that his parents would be able to take the children to live with them, but now felt that his mother was getting too old and feeble to give them proper care. Miss Hart then began to tell him of the home the agency had in view for the children. She wanted to be sure of his approval before actually making the placement, she explained. He thought the home sounded fine. Then, as he did not mention his wife, the visitor rather casually remarked that she had not yet met her. He seemed very much surprised. He talked,

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As often happens, it was the parents of the children, rather than the thus-far seemingly unproblematic youngsters themselves, who needed to be explained. Edith was pictured by Miss Hart as an out-of-doors girl who entered into the games Harry liked, and Harry as full of mischief and boyish pranks. Neither one was known to have any bad habits, but they had of course been deprived of much individual love and care which they should have had, and needed affection and the security which they had failed to find in their own home. However much one might anticipate trouble with a little boy who had been a good deal rejected and a little girl who had been somewhat spoiled by parents who for several years had seen them only rarely, there was little practical utility in enlarging upon possible problems in the offing. If the foster parents would handle the two children fairly and show them equal affection, one might hope that other influences would not prove seriously upsetting. It was primarily because the Ulsters appeared to be outgoing people who loved children and possessed unusual sympathy with them and understanding of their needs, that the home was being selected. Miss Hart therefore devoted herself more especially to trying to give them a working basis for contacts with Mr. and Mrs. Norton.

She pictured the parents as people who had known a good deal of unhappiness, who were separated at present, and who were in need—both of them—of friendship and interest which would be understanding and not too critical. The mother would probably visit more frequently than the father—to the other foster home she had gone nearly every Sunday. She would probably talk against her husband to them, and it was important that they not be led into taking sides

with her against him, chiefly because of the harm it would do the children to be poisoned against their father.

The Ulsters seemed fully to appreciate this point. They explained that they were not always at home on Sundays but that the parents might come weekdays as well, and they would try to make their visits enjoyable to them. Mrs. Ulster said she would listen to the mother's story with a sympathetic ear but would not encourage her to dwell on the subject of her marital troubles; whenever possible she would turn the conversation to other interests.

Like the earlier visitor to the home, Miss Hart came away with a feeling of confidence in it. The young Nortons would have an opportunity to become part of a normal, active group of children in the neighborhood, in school, and in Sunday school—for the Ulsters appeared to be not merely church-goers but sincerely attached to their church. The home itself was attractively and comfortably furnished—a home that was obviously lived in, and subject to no economic stress. The foster parents themselves struck her, despite their emotional need of children, as capable of viewing youngsters who might be placed in their care somewhat objectively. In short, the placement looked like a good one.

In the three and a half years which have since elapsed, it has proved to be so.

Only at the beginning does there seem to have been any doubt in the foster parents' minds about wanting to keep the children. The family were moving, that first week, and Edith and Harry got in Mrs. Ulster's way so much and asked so many questions that she was a good deal bothered. As soon as the new house was settled and she had rested, she began to



enjoy them. By the end of the first month, both she and her husband felt that they would not want to be without the children, and all the evidence indicates that they have felt that way ever since.

As was anticipated by the agency, the simplest relationships growing out of this placement have been those between foster parents and children. Mr. and Mrs. Ulster are what they seemed to be—a thoroughly wholesome, normal couple who are devoted to one another and sincerely interested in children. They make an occasional mistake, but on the whole have managed the two entrusted to them admirably. Edith and Harry, too, fulfill their promise: they are average youngsters with plenty of commonplace faults but no dire defects or alarming problems. The most serious incident involving Edith seems to have occurred when she helped herself to some nut meats set away on the pantry shelf; while Harry's two major crimes have been his extraction, without permission, of some money from his own savings bank, and his expenditure for candy of one cent change from a quarter entrusted to him for an errand. These derelictions were made the occasion of serious talks by the foster parents on the theme of honesty, with particular applications to the case in hand. Parents generally will agree, we fancy, that when such episodes as these are the outstanding difficulties of three years, relations within the home must have been running fairly smoothly.

To dwell on such negative aspects would be absurd when positive ones are scattered on nearly every page of the record. Here are a few of them:

The youngsters like this home better than their former one, Edith says. The first time the visitor calls, the little girl comes home from school with a sheet of paper on which she

has pasted several pictures of babies for auntie "because auntie loves babies." Auntie has brought home some pumpkin lanterns for Hallowe'en, and the children are looking forward to having great fun going out with them that night. . . . Edith doesn't like school—never *has* liked school—but seems to appreciate uncle's and auntie's efforts to help her with lessons, and likes to have auntie visit the school. (It turns out that the child has been entered a grade ahead of her proper one; when this mistake is corrected she does better.) . . . The children sing with the foster mother nearly every evening before they go to bed. The foster father often reads to them evenings. The children tease one another and scrap more or less, if they do things together like washing the supper dishes. The Ulsters consider such behavior between brothers and sisters rather to be expected, and rearrange the work so that they do the dishes alone on alternate nights. . . . Edith is rather lazy. Her duties are to keep her room picked up and in order and, as mentioned above, to do the dishes every other night. She takes longer than necessary and is rather sloppy, but Mrs. Ulster praises her for everything she does well, doesn't make it hard for her when she makes mistakes, but tells her how to do it right next time. . . . One day when different styles of haircuts were being discussed, Edith said, "Auntie, is it the difference in haircuts that makes the difference between boys and girls?" The foster mother answered, "No, their bodies are made differently." Edith made no further comment. . . . The children have joined Mrs. Ulster in waving good-by to Mr. Ulster when he drives off to work mornings, and as they want to be waved to, too, she now goes through the ceremony a second time each day. . . . One evening the foster mother went out, leaving the children in her husband's care. They were supposed to be in

bed by eight o'clock. When she reached home a little after nine all the lights were on and she wondered what was happening. She found her husband in the living-room doing tricks for the two youngsters, who, in their pajamas, looked on eagerly. . . . Edith's birthday comes soon, and the foster mother plans to invite nine of the children in the neighborhood to a birthday party. . . . Edith woke up the other morning crying, and told the foster mother that she had dreamed that she and Harry were going away from there. A few nights after that the same thing happened to Mrs. Ulster, and she told the children that she had found herself crying because she thought they were going to leave. This seemed to please the children and they appreciated the fact that the foster mother would feel badly if they had to go. . . . Mrs. Ulster visited the children's new school. (This is in the fall; the family had moved at the end of the previous school year.) She talked to both their teachers, explaining to them that the children's parents were separated, that Edith and Harry had been in several different homes and schools and that she felt sure, when they had been here long enough to feel secure and settled, they would do better work. She told both the teachers that the visitor might come to see them, and as the children were somewhat sensitive about having it known that they were placed by an agency, suggested that no mention be made of this fact before the other children. To Edith and Harry themselves she suggested that they tell people the visitor was a friend of their mother's.

The interest and initiative shown by the foster mother in these approaches to the new school were generally characteristic of her. There was never anything perfunctory about her work for or with the children. She was also a sweet-tempered, sunny person. Nevertheless she made an occasional mistake—

as when, on the occasion of Harry's first wetting the bed, she threatened him with a ruler if he let it happen again. She was readily convinced that this was a poor way to deal with the situation. The boy's difficulty soon cleared up, but months later he surprised her by coming in wet from play. She reacted by telling him that if this happened again she'd put one of Edith's dresses on him and send him out. She was sorry she had said this, she later told the visitor; she would never *do* such a thing. . . . The foster father's worst mistake was made when Harry (as already related) opened his own small savings bank and helped himself—a grave offense in Mr. Ulster's eyes, which led him to warn the boy that if he was going to do such things he couldn't stay with them. This error, too, was duly acknowledged and regretted. . . . Such mistakes as these, if persisted in, would render any home an unfit place in which to rear the young; humiliating and threatening children are two ancient instruments of torture, use of which is no longer justified by anyone. As single episodes, they do not seem to have interfered with the success of this placement or left any discoverable scars. Harry seems a happy, normal boy—who, if the foster parents permitted themselves to have a preference, would be the favorite of both.

The children's father has come frequently to the agency office to pay their board and inquire about them, and has seen the children and the foster mother there occasionally when they have come in for periodic health examinations, but has not visited in the foster home. The first time he and the foster mother met, the worker left them alone to talk. Mr. Norton later gave it as his opinion that Mrs. Ulster was fine with the children. She evidently avoided being drawn into any

discussion of family difficulties, for she reported that she had told him she was interested only in the children, not in his or his wife's private affairs

While the direct relationship between foster mother and father has thus been slight, it has fallen to Mrs Ulster's lot to interpret to the children the man's persistent failure to visit in the home, about which they often question Though she herself has found this hard to understand, she has always made excuses for him to Edith and Harry he was very busy, couldn't take the time off for the trip, and so on, and has seconded the visitor in emphasizing the interest he displays when he inquires for them at the office To the visitor she says she is sure he must love his children, incomprehensible though his behavior is to her

At one time the visitor passed on to Mrs Ulster an explanation the father had given her of why he didn't write to Edith and Harry he wrote a pretty poor letter, he said, and if his wife got hold of one of them she'd be sure to ridicule it before the children The visitor suggested to the foster mother that it would hardly be wise to advise the children not to show their father's letters to their mother, as this fairly clear reference to the rift between the parents might prove upsetting Mrs Ulster, when letters from Mr Norton arrived and had been talked over, did, however, suggest that now they be put away and not shown to anybody, as the children's correspondence with their father concerned nobody but themselves

In contrast to her husband, Mrs Norton has been a regular visitor to the foster home At the outset the Ulsters explained to her that they could not undertake to be at home more than one Sunday in the month, Sundays were Mr Ulster's only free days, he and his wife were in the habit of vis

iting friends and relatives or jaunting off in their car on these days, and naturally would take the children with them. The mother was welcome to visit any weekday, however.

Mrs. Norton accepted this limitation in good part. Her first visit in the home went off pleasantly, except that the children insisted in sitting on her, pulling at her clothing, and mussing up her hair, to her considerable annoyance; neither she nor the foster mother could persuade them to desist. Also, at the end of the visit, when Mrs. Norton remarked to the children that she would not be seeing them the following Sunday, Edith spoke up: "Why, that doesn't matter, we have auntie and uncle." The foster mother ("feeling terrible," as she afterwards explained) turned to the child and said, "Edith, we could never take the place of your own father and mother." She thought Mrs. Norton appreciated her attitude, and was especially pleased to receive a friendly note from her soon afterwards expressing her hope that the foster mother's cold was better so that she might be able to sing with the children when next the mother visited.

This next visit was an unexpected one; a friend of Mrs. Norton's—apparently an old friend, for the children seemed to know and like him—drove her out one evening, after she had telephoned to make sure the family were at home. The mother brought puzzles which kept Edith and Harry amused most of the evening, and they sang with the foster mother. Their mother seemed charmed and praised Mrs. Ulster for the way she had taught them. After the youngsters had gone to their room, the four adults visited congenially. Mrs. Ulster brought up Edith's remark, referred to above, saying how sorry she was that the child had expressed herself that way. Mrs. Norton said, "It hurt me so I thought I would scream." Mrs. Ulster replied, "You need never worry about

Mr. Ulster and me. We would not want to come between you and the children. We are helping them to appreciate all you do for them. We know you work hard and do everything possible for them." Mrs. Norton's friend here spoke up and said, "Everything on the radio has a theme song now. The children are Mrs. Norton's theme song—all she can talk about is Edith and Harry." *The mother went on to express her satisfaction with the way Mrs. Ulster refrained from bundling the children up and with the fact that Harry was learning to go without his hat. Mr. Ulster made a point of saying that he hoped the children would be allowed to complete the school year in their present school. He was careful to add that of course they should be with their own mother if that were possible—he realized how much she loved them and had even wondered if she couldn't come out there to live; but it was important that they have an uninterrupted year. The mother seemed appreciative of his interest. Altogether, everything went off well, and in telling the agency worker about the visit Mrs. Ulster was enthusiastic.*

The good relations thus established have been maintained—for a period of some months with apparent enthusiasm on both sides, more recently not without strain and effort. Mrs. Norton has trusted Mrs. Ulster, sending her money to buy clothing needed by the children, paying bills for small extras apparently without question, and showing confidence in her management in matters of greater importance. Owing, probably, largely to the care exercised and the consideration shown by the foster mother, Mrs. Norton has shown few signs of the jealousy that so often appears in a mother who sees her children growing devoted to another woman, and has never for a moment considered removing them from the home.

One episode recorded at about the end of the children's first year in this home reveals irritations possibly related to such a feeling of jealousy, but seems to have no sequel. One day Edith attempted to play something on the piano for her mother. Mrs. Ulster was called out during the performance, and when she came back found Mrs. Norton scolding the child as she tried to correct her playing, while Edith insisted, with tears, that she had played the piece the way auntie played it. Mrs. Ulster was careful to keep out of the room as well as out of the controversy, but in relating the incident to the visitor she said she had all she could do not to interfere. She had worried lest the mother think she had been influencing the child against her, but the next visit went off as pleasantly as usual.

Probably no one who is responsible for training a child finds it easy to sit by while somebody else—parent or outsider—criticizes the recipient of that training. Another time when the Ulsters had all they could do to remain silent was when Mrs. Norton's friend, who had been invited to dinner with her, made unfavorable comment on Edith's attitude of expecting to be served instead of serving herself. The foster parents had not felt that the child had arrived at years of sufficient discretion to be trusted with this responsibility; but Mrs. Ulster, in telling of the incident, said that afterwards, when they talked the matter over, they wondered if they had made a mistake and decided to begin teaching her to serve herself. She adds that if Mr. Hurd ever came again they would continue their old way, because "they would not like him to think he could tell them how to bring up children"!—an amusingly human bit.

The really serious strain on the foster parents' emotions, however, began within the last year, when, with a divorce



from the father pending, Mrs. Norton began to visit the home with a new friend who turned out to be her fiancé. Mr. and Mrs. Ulster, now much beloved by the children and whole-heartedly devoted to them, were concerned at the prospect of losing them, and at the same time concerned for the children lest the mother fail to make a place for them in her future home. Bits of evidence had by now accumulated to show that Mrs. Norton was far from skilful in handling her children. She seemed to have little patience with them and little firmness. The original conviction of the agency workers that under all her protestations of affection there was a deep-lying rejection had never changed. Now, in addition, it became obvious that the prospective stepfather strongly favored Edith and was harshly critical of Harry. Under these circumstances it was hard to tell whether it was one's duty to wish for the children's reunion with their mother. Any such wish on the foster parents' part must have been somewhat less than half-hearted, in view of the children's contentment and their own, in the present situation. Nevertheless, they continued to exercise the self-control necessary to insure the success of the periodic visits. At the date of present writing the mother's second marriage has taken place, and the end of the school year, rather vaguely mentioned by her as the time for the children's transfer to their new home, is being awaited with mingled feelings by all concerned.

By the time Edith and Harry were settled in the Ulster home, relations between the agency and their parents would seem to have passed the critical stage. Mr. Norton had apparently made up his mind that he had been mistaken in his original conviction that any agency chosen by his wife would believe all she said against him and inevitably take sides. His

frequent calls to make payments on board bills and to inquire for the children were made as agreeable to him as possible. If a request from him—as for a lower rate of board—had to be denied, it was done in the form of a general statement about rates to foster homes. If he declared himself unable to pay a bill—as for dental services—he was assured that the agency was certain that he was doing his best to meet obligations for his children. When he asked the visitor to deliver messages to his wife, in the days before a divorce was agreed upon, he was not met by a flat refusal, but these small commissions were at first obligingly carried out, though soon it was explained to him that the agency could in future concern itself only with the welfare of the children, leaving him and his wife to arrange their differences between themselves. Concerning the children, the workers were at all times ready to give full information and to consider the father's wishes and points of view. As he thus came to be better known, he was not an unreasonable or difficult person to deal with. There are moments, indeed, when one has considerable sympathy for him, as when he confesses the reason why he fears to write to his children.

After the children were placed in the Ulster home and the mother began her regular visiting there, she was less often seen by the agency representatives; indeed, during the children's first year in the home, only six references are made in the record to calls by her at the office. When she did come, it was for some practical purpose such as paying on the children's clothing bill or inquiring regarding plans for Harry, at a time when he was undergoing a slight operation. That first winter she expressed her satisfaction with the foster home and her hope that the children could stay in it all summer instead of going to their grandparents as they

had done the year before. This was the plan actually carried out, to the satisfaction of parents and foster parents.

It was with the foster parents, naturally, that the agency's relationship was closest. At first, visits to the home—which, as will be recalled, was a new one—were made once a month or oftener, later the intervals were somewhat lengthened, with telephone conversations or visits by the foster mother and children to the office between times.

Visits to the home are of course not made in a critical, faultfinding spirit, but when any defects in management do crop up, they are frankly discussed. Thus when Mrs. Ulster explained her threat about using the ruler on Harry by saying that she felt she should scare him because she couldn't have him wetting the bed, the visitor remarked that there were different causes for bed wetting and asked if the foster mother would be interested in knowing about them. She answered that she would be glad to read some literature on the subject, that perhaps she didn't know as much as she thought she did about children. Actually she did read part of a book sent her<sup>1</sup> and came to the conclusion that Harry's difficulty arose from his being afraid to get up in the dark in a new place. This guess seemed confirmed when the trouble rather quickly cleared up.

On an earlier page occurs a reference to a question by Edith about haircuts and the difference between boys and girls, and Mrs. Ulster's brief but sensible answer.<sup>2</sup> At a later visit the worker brings this subject up again and the conversation which ensues is reported by her as follows:

Visitor asked Mrs. Ulster if the children had shown any sex curi-

<sup>1</sup> Douglas A. Thom, M.D., *Everyday Problems of the Everyday Child* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1927).

<sup>2</sup> See page 251.

osity since our last conversation on the subject. She said no, then added, "Don't you really think that they learn things soon enough and that it is best for them to be innocent as long as possible?" Visitor asked Mrs. Ulster if she felt a lack of knowledge was innocence. In answer foster mother said frankly that she had had no sex information before her marriage and that it was not until her baby was born that she had any conception of what giving birth to a baby really meant—in fact, the first time she felt life she was frightened so that both her mother and her husband had to reassure her she was all right. Asked Mrs. Ulster if she thought any young people today lacked sex information of one sort or another. We discussed the subject at length. Mrs. Ulster finally said she supposed a lack of knowledge now could be called ignorance rather than innocence. Visitor agreed with her and told of some helpful literature that she had been reading in order to be able to answer children's questions regarding sex. Visitor pointed out to Mrs. Ulster that sex information does not shock children when they have asked questions, especially if it is given to them by a person who satisfied their curiosity at the time. Mrs. Ulster asked visitor if she would send her some literature. Said she knew she did not know how to go about answering a child who questioned her, that she would be inclined to say "You are too young, when you are older you will understand." She stated that was the way her mother kept her innocent, then laughed and said "not innocent but ignorant." Visitor asked if she remembered Edith's question about the difference between boys and girls being told by the way their hair is cut, and foster mother's reply to this question. Mrs. Ulster laughed and said yes. Visitor told her she had done a fine thing—that that was the sort of an answer Edith needed. Mrs. Ulster was encouraged.

Special educational attempts like these are of course not always to the fore when supervisory visits are made. Often there is consultation about school adjustments or about necessary health measures, occasionally life has been flowing along so smoothly that the talk is such as might occur between friends or relatives with a keen common interest in the children. Sometimes the foster mother has been turning over in

her mind some question of management about which she is not clear and welcomes this chance to discuss it. Once in a while she may have done something that she feels was a mistake or not quite fair to the agency. Thus Mrs. Ulster once asked the visitor whether the agency would let the children visit their mother. The visitor answered that probably it would. The foster mother then confessed that she had let *them spend two days with the mother over a holiday* several months ago, telling her not to let the agency know, and had worried about the matter ever since. Mrs. Norton, she thought, would not want to take them again, as they were very naughty and she was "a wreck."

One of the visitor's most important functions in a foster home is to support and encourage the foster mother when she grows weary in well doing that does not seem to be bringing much result. Mrs. Ulster has seldom been in a discouraged frame of mind, partly because she is a happy natured, well balanced person, partly because the children have really caused her little serious anxiety. Nevertheless encouragement has had its place with her, especially at times when she admitted having made mistakes, and expressions of appreciation for good work done have been as welcome to her, and as helpful, as they are to most of us. Relations between her and her visitors have always been happy, without the strain that sometimes has to be overcome when a foster mother finds difficulty in admitting error or accepting criticism.

## *"Pure Motherly"*

MRS TOLMAN stands out among foster mothers as a woman who had enjoyed unusual opportunities in early life, who read and spoke several European languages, and whose approach to the problems of parenthood and foster parenthood was an unusually intellectual one. At the same time, her attitude toward her foster son was aptly described by her own phrase used on the application blank to describe her motive in applying to take a child—"pure motherly."

This foster mother's life history, as she sketched it to her first visitor, fell into two approximately equal parts. The first nineteen years had been spent as the daughter of a well-to-do Jewish family in Austria, where, along with her brothers and sisters, she received a cultural education and enjoyed many advantages. Then came her marriage and, soon after, her removal with her husband to the United States. The nineteen years of her married life had been years of comparative poverty, and instead of having unlimited time for reading she had spent her days in housework and in caring for her children. However, her conversation showed that she had kept abreast of the new psychology and was not only familiar with mental hygiene concepts applicable to the training of children but was in the habit of applying them in her dealings with her own three.

In the course of the first visit to the Tolman home the visitor made the acquaintance of these youngsters as well as of their mother. The boys, aged eleven and fifteen, came in from the street at Mrs. Tolman's request, and the baby girl, one year old, arrived in the arms of her younger big brother who had been temporarily taking care of her. She was a

Every child-placing agency, of course, receives children of many different levels of intelligence. Usually an effort is made to place a child in a home of corresponding level, so that he will neither be held down by a family beneath him in general intelligence, nor made to feel inferior by his inability to make the grade the family lives on. It is doubtless this generally recognized principle which led the visitor to recommend that a bright child be placed in this home.

The special interest attaching to the placement actually made is, in part, that it violated this generally accepted principle, yet proved a success. The boy who came to the Tolmans about two months later, and who remained in the home for nearly five years,<sup>1</sup> was a dull child who ordinarily would have been expected to be thoroughly unhappy in such a high-grade home. To trace the steps by which success—relative success, of course—was achieved under these circumstances should prove an interesting process. First, however, it will be desirable to go back a little in an effort to form some notion of the boy's background, make-up, and problem, and of his experiences while under the agency's care before he was placed with Mrs. Tolman.

About a month after Mrs. Tolman's home was visited, the agency accepted for care a "highly unstable" ten-year-old boy of "psychopathic tendencies." This boy, Joseph Zimmerman, had been known for two years to an agency which maintained a psychiatric clinic, and recourse was now had to a child-placing agency because all efforts to adjust him in own home had failed. Those who were best acquainted with the home situation considered that the inability of his parents

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<sup>1</sup> This is a fact, though the story which follows was written before the end of the five-year period



plump, healthy looking little thing, her mother's chief joy and an object of devotion to the boys. They were much less husky in appearance, indeed, their thinness and paleness impressed the visitor and raised some question in her mind as to diet and care—doubts which the family doctor speedily dispelled, declaring that Mrs Tolman was one of the most intelligent mothers he knew in carrying out his suggestions for the care of the baby and the boys alike. The boys were tactfully introduced by their mother and appeared at ease with the stranger, talking freely and pleasantly about school or whatever topic happened to come up. Maurice, the younger, was an especially bright, sociable little chap, indeed, his mother had several times to silence him because he interrupted her and the visitor.

In discussing the education of her sons, Mrs Tolman showed no special drive, though she said she hoped they could go through high school before choosing their life work. The elder, who was keenly enjoying his high school course, wanted so many things she couldn't afford to buy him, she said, that on her advice he was looking for an after-school job.

The Tolman home was a comfortable five room apartment, rather poorly furnished, on a quiet street. Any boy who might be placed there would share the third bedroom with the younger Tolman boy. Mr Tolman worked with one of the express companies in a railway terminal building. He was not seen by the visitor. He was some years older than his wife. According to her he would be pleased to have another child in the home.

The first visitor to the home was on the whole favorably impressed. She recommended that it be used for a bright child and that it be carefully watched.

Every child-placing agency, of course, receives children of many different levels of intelligence. Usually an effort is made to place a child in a home of corresponding level, so that he will neither be held down by a family beneath him in general intelligence, nor made to feel inferior by his inability to make the grade the family lives on. It is doubtless this generally recognized principle which led the visitor to recommend that a bright child be placed in this home.

The special interest attaching to the placement actually made is, in part, that it violated this generally accepted principle, yet proved a success. The boy who came to the Tolmans about two months later, and who remained in the home for nearly five years,<sup>1</sup> was a dull child who ordinarily would have been expected to be thoroughly unhappy in such a high-grade home. To trace the steps by which success—relative success, of course—was achieved under these circumstances should prove an interesting process. First, however, it will be desirable to go back a little in an effort to form some notion of the boy's background, make-up, and problem, and of his experiences while under the agency's care before he was placed with Mrs. Tolman.

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to understand him or give him proper care had been largely responsible for his difficulties

Joseph's parents were poor immigrants, very ignorant and superstitious. His father, the more intelligent and stable of the two, was weak and ineffectual. Though he had been for more than fifteen years in the United States, he had never been able to pass his citizenship tests, and he was entirely unable to cope with his family situation. Mrs. Zimmerman was illiterate, excessively emotional, in wretched physical health, and a constant complainer. She was intensely prejudiced against Joseph and openly favored her younger son, holding him up as a model to Joseph. One is not surprised to learn that the two fought bitterly, or that the younger was badly spoiled. An older sister was also extremely antagonistic toward Joseph, and he complained that when they quarreled his mother always took her part.

Mrs. Zimmerman's aversion for her older son was indeed extreme. She declared that he had been a source of trouble since babyhood. He did not walk till he was two, or begin to talk (except for "pa" and "ma") till he was three. Before this, however, he was already having outbursts of temper in which he would strike and kick her. These had continued down to the present time, whenever he was crossed in any way he would go into terrific rages in which he hit and cursed and kicked anyone within reach, except his father. Recently he had struck his mother such a blow that her life had been endangered.

Another phase of Joseph's trouble was his excessive fearfulness. As a small child whenever he was ill or met with an accident he had been desperately afraid of the physicians who cared for him. More recently he had developed an extreme fear of dirt, which in conversation with the psychiatrist he ex-

plained was a fear of being poisoned. He would complain bitterly that the table dishes were not clean—though his mother was a good housekeeper—that there was dirt in the cracks in the plates; and he would inspect suspiciously every bit of food served him. If anyone touched a roll which he had selected for himself he would go into a spasm of rage. When he took off his clothes at night someone must hold them on a hanger till he had brushed them, then they must be hung away out of the dust. He was also desperately afraid of accidents—so much so that he refused to play in the street and would not even go downstairs unless his mother stood and watched him. Fundamentally, it was death, from one cause or another, that he feared. To the psychiatrist he admitted harboring death wishes against various members of his family, and his fear of death was therefore interpreted as a projection of these wishes. The psychiatrist believed the boy to be suffering from a deep-rooted neurosis marked by phobias and obsessions.

In connection with this history of uncontrolled outbreaks and unreasonable fears it is, however, important to remember that the behavior of other members of the family, particularly the mother and sister, was extremely provocative. Upbraidings and blows were quite the order of the day where the boy was concerned. In the opinion of a visitor who had been often in the home as a representative of the clinic, the efforts made to modify family attitudes toward Joseph had only made them more extreme. The other two children had come to form, with their mother, a sort of league against him. She declared that she could not understand him, that there would be no improvement so long as he remained at home, that he must be removed.

It was not only at home that Joseph was in trouble; from

the beginning his school life had been a source of frustration and irritation. The one retarded child in the family, he had repeated every grade so that his eight-year old brother had now overtaken him. His teacher reported that he was a trouble maker among the children, whom he tormented in various ways, and was very poor in most of his subjects. To social workers and psychiatrist he showed his sensitiveness to failure by insisting that he liked school and got on well there. In two psychometric tests he had been given ratings which placed him among dull-normals. He could not read any of the material presented, but was up to his age level in arithmetical reasoning and rote memory. His speech, said to be his "most striking characteristic," is described as "monosyllabic, sharply enunciated, rigidly formalistic." Taken with his slowness in beginning to talk, and his reading disability, this suggested to the psychologist the possible existence of an organic factor handicapping him with verbal material.

On his first appearance at the child placing agency's office, it was noted that Joseph had some definite assets: he was of average size for his age, and "quite attractive-looking", and he was noticeably clean and neat. His future visitor entered into conversation with him, asking whether he knew why he had come to the agency. He shrugged his shoulders, and after a pause said, "I did not think about it." Later he mentioned that he had wanted to run away from another office which he had visited earlier in the day with his father, because they had to wait so long, but "he told me that I had to stay." The visitor talked to him about his own home and led him to draw the conclusion that since he had not been getting along very well with his family and was not very happy, the agency would try to see whether he could make a better ad-

justment by living away from home for a while. Throughout the interview he was somewhat subdued and agreed to everything. He submitted to the medical examination without protest.

Since so little could be foretold about Joseph's reaction to placement, it was decided to try him first in the home of a foster mother who was well known to the agency. Mrs. Pfeifer had four children of her own, all of working age, and for five years past had been caring for two foster children, a brother and sister, who were a few years older than Joseph. Joseph went willingly to this home and showed interest in the neighborhood and the school he would attend, remarking that the subjects he liked best were arithmetic and drawing. Just before they reached the home he asked the visitor, "How long do I have to stay here?" She replied that this depended mainly on his behavior and that he might like it so well that he would want to stay for some time.

The reception given Joseph in this home was a cordial one, and for three weeks he lived quietly along without creating any major difficulty. Then—for no reason that was ever recorded—he broke out into a violent temper one morning at breakfast: "refused to eat, stamped and yelled, threw food on the floor and stepped on it, threatened to break everything, told foster mother he wished she were dead so that he could step all over her, cursed everybody, used a kind of language . . . she had never heard before." When the visitor called, in response to a telephone message, the foster mother was so upset that she became hysterical. Joseph sat calmly by and listened to her account of his behavior, seeming not at all disturbed.

After many homes had been considered for Joseph, one was selected largely because it was near at hand and he would

not have to make a change either in public or in Hebrew school. Mrs. Matson had cared satisfactorily for many foster children with behavior problems. At this time there were in the home, besides her husband and grown son, two rather bright jolly brothers one of whom was not far from Joseph's age. This youngster received Joseph, showing him where to put his things and telling him about the fun he and his brother had downstairs and before going to bed. For the first time, his visitor reports, Joseph smiled and looked happy.

However, this placement lasted only a little over a week, ending with another terrific blow-up on Joseph's part. This time the causes of the explosion were known. Mrs. Matson had at first put a cot for Joseph in the room with the two brothers, and the three boys had larked about for a long time before going to bed. Because they could not be persuaded to go to sleep early, Mrs. Matson had, on the day in question, moved Joseph's cot into her son's room. Joseph, greatly upset at the change, refused to go to bed and joined with the others in cutting up. Mr. Matson tried to insist that they all quiet down, and finally took off his belt and threatened (more or less jokingly) to strike them with it if they didn't go to bed. At this, though he was not actually struck and though the other boys were not at all disturbed, Joseph began to kick, strike, and curse the foster father and ran out of the apartment to yell in the hallway, insisting that he would take his hat and coat and go away. To get him back into the house, Mr. Matson threatened to call the police, and this seemed to frighten the boy. He finally went to bed and to sleep. Next morning Mrs. Matson sent him back to the office under the guidance of the older foster brother. Over the phone she explained what had happened. They felt Joseph

had acted as though he were mentally deranged, and were too upset and frightened to keep him any longer.

Joseph, in his own account of the affair at the office, kept saying over and over, "He is not my father and he has no right to hit me"—though he admitted he had not actually been hit. He also kept asking, "Why did she change my room?" Reasoning with him seemed to do no good. The visitor concluded that when any change affecting him was to be made, a careful explanation should be given him beforehand.

During this second interlude in the agency's office, Joseph asked a number of questions: How long before he would be placed again? Where was he going? and, Why couldn't he go to a certain institution which he named?

There had been some talk, before Joseph left his own home, about his going to this institution, and his family had favored the idea; but the agency had not realized that this had been all along the goal of Joseph's desire. Carefully the visitor now explained that such outbreaks of temper as he had had in the two foster homes would prevent his being transferred to the institution, that if he wanted to go there he must learn to control his temper.

It was at this crisis in Joseph's affairs that Mrs. Tolman agreed to take him into her home. She was told that he was a highly unstable boy of psychopathic tendencies, and his behavior was described to her. "She understood the problem very well," reports the visitor who interviewed her, and "felt certain that she could handle a child with these difficulties."

The record of Joe's experiences from this time on, and of the way he was handled in the Tolman home, is unusually full and interesting. For this reason rather extensive notes will be presented covering, in approximate chronological or-



der, the more important points brought out during the next three years. Details regarding the family life are taken from a paper prepared by the foster mother, at the agency's request, some eight months after Joseph went to live with her.

Of the meeting between Joseph and his new foster mother, which occurred in the agency's office, we are told only that she "greeted him in a very friendly manner and he went willingly with her."

The boy's behavior during this day of waiting and of transfer to his new home was noticeable. Most of the time, in the office, he sat in one position, holding his hat and coat tightly and keeping an eye on his other possessions, and if obliged to move insisted on taking them with him. Upon arriving in the Tolman home, he looked round suspiciously "as though he imagined that some dangers might be lurking there." He made the foster mother think of a "frightened animal that should be tamed with a lot of coaxing, sympathy, and great patience." Noticing that he liked to have all his things in one place and was very careful of them she gave him some drawers, in which he put everything away in orderly fashion. She talked to him about his school work, trying to find out whether he would like to be helped with it, but when he seemed disinclined to accept the suggestion she did not persist.

At supper Joseph ate sparingly. He chewed slowly and mechanically, like an automaton, without any spirit. When it was over, he asked the oldest Tolman boy whether he played checkers, and they played a few games. Joseph proved to be a "shrewd and skilful player" but a poor loser. Noticing this, his antagonist "allowed him to win so as to make him feel more at home." Joseph then watched a game of chess that was in progress between Mr. Tolman and a friend and be-

came much interested in it. The foster father promised to teach him the game.

On the following day Mrs. Tolman told the visitor that she thought she could manage Joseph. She had taken her boys into her confidence so as to insure their being kind and patient with him. Nothing was said in this connection about Mr. Tolman, but it is evident that she could count also on his cooperation.

One of the basic points in Mrs. Tolman's handling of the boy, mentioned during this first month, was that she never ordered him to do anything. She merely suggested that he do this or that, and if he didn't comply, refrained from comment, as did also her boys. Another important point was her care to explain her reasons when any change of plan became necessary, as when she found herself unable to carry out a promise. She felt it to be important that he come to realize that people sometimes have to change their minds, and that there is no need of going into temper tantrums because of promises not carried out.

Joseph's first day in the new school was a stormy one. On reaching home he told his foster mother that the whole class had been after him. When she investigated, she found the reverse to have been true: the teacher said he had come into the room like a cyclone, kicking the boy behind him, pinching or hitting the one in front, slapping the one beside him. Mrs. Tolman carefully explained his problem, and the teacher became interested and agreed to do all she could for him.

In the street Joseph's behavior was equally provocative. The only way he knew how to assert himself, apparently, was by "hitting the next fellow." Moreover, he would often hit from behind. After a flagrant instance of this, the foster mother took the matter up in a family conference, her sons

helping her to explain how this was an underhand way of behaving, and not manly. This point was a hard one to get over to Joseph, who notably lacked a social sense and was immature emotionally. Part of his emotional disturbance, Mrs. Tolman felt, was due to his inability to express himself properly in words; his emotions backed up, so to speak, and overflowed into action. His childhood background had been a narrow one, he was extremely superstitious, and he seemed bewildered by much that he heard and saw in the new neighborhood.

In the home Joseph also showed that he lacked a sense of sharing with the other children. One evening the Tolmans' baby girl was ill and her father was trying to amuse her. She had broken a harmonica to which she was devoted, so Mr. Tolman asked that Joseph lend her his. Joseph refused. Mr. Tolman then suggested that Joseph sell the harmonica and get himself another. Joseph answered, "I don't want to sell. If I would want to sell, I would buy a lot and sell. I got only one and I am not selling it." The foster father realized that the boy did not grasp the significance of his request. Later in the evening the foster mother "talked to Joseph and tried to explain to him why he should have given the harmonica to the child."

Soon after Joseph came to the home Mrs. Tolman bought an erector set for the boys—carefully explaining to Joseph that it was for them all. He built many things with it. Usually her boys had to help him, but they did it willingly. When he had completed anything he would boast of how well he had done it, disregarding the fact that the boys had helped him.

A month or so after Joseph went to the Tolmans, the agency's visitor found him at home one day. He was looking

much improved physically, but wore a worried, depressed expression. His school work, it appeared, was still very poor, although according to Mrs. Tolman he was trying hard. She encouraged him and stimulated him to take more interest in reading, while she made every effort to get to the bottom of what seemed to be his resentment at having to learn to read and write.

At about this time Joseph's father and mother visited the foster home. Mrs. Tolman talked to them both about Joseph's difficulties, trying to persuade them not to worry the boy too much about religion, and not to remind him of the quarrels and other unpleasant experiences he had been involved in when at home. Mrs. Zimmerman she found extremely ignorant and fanatical, Mr. Zimmerman far more reasonable and cooperative. She visited their home, too, reporting to the visitor that she found it neat and clean, and that the other children in the family were fairly bright. As opportunity offered, she continued to work with the parents as well as their son. She felt quite hopeful, she said, of being able to bring about some adjustment, if only she could keep the boy long enough. At this time Joseph was talking of going home at the end of a year—something which all those who were trying to help him realized would mean certain reversion to the old pattern of behavior.

Once, during this first winter in the foster home, Joseph got into a quarrel with a non-Jewish boy on the street. How the trouble began does not appear, but a serious fight would have resulted if his older foster brother had not been there. That evening the foster mother talked to Joseph for two hours or so, explaining to him that all people were alike, regardless of their religion. He asked many questions about other religions, which she answered as well as she could.

Not long after, Joseph and this same foster brother were on the verge of a serious falling-out. The older boy was talking with a girl near the entrance to the house where the family lived when Joseph began to tease and gibe at him, making remarks which he found most offensive. If to strike Joseph had not been strictly forbidden, the affair would have come to blows. As it was, her son complained bitterly to Mrs. Tolman, and she felt constrained to give Joseph a scolding, even though she knew this would upset him. As she explained to the visitor, she really had to protect her son, since she wouldn't allow him to protect himself. She asked advice as to whether she should ignore Joseph's resulting depression and indirectly make up to him by giving him something or treating him to something. Her visitor thought she might do this, if she was careful not to let the treat seem to be a reward.

Spring brought something of a crisis at school. Joseph had been feeling very badly over his failure to progress—so much so that when the visitor saw him at home one noon late in the winter his eyes filled with tears at her mention of school, and he was unable to talk. He gave the impression of having many emotional conflicts which he could not express. His teacher told of his extreme difficulty in grasping his work, especially reading and spelling, and of his anti-social attitude toward the other children—though she felt she had now "more or less overcome" this. Mrs. Tolman had been to see her several times, she said, and had been of great help in explaining the boy and suggesting how to deal with him. The teacher felt, however, that he would not be able to stay in a regular class, that there was "something radically wrong with his mentality." At this time Joseph was in the third grade, and his report showed him to be deficient in every subject ex-

cept arithmetic. Psychometric tests were arranged by agency and school, and at the end of March he was transferred to an ungraded class.

Joseph was not at all pleased with this change. He felt it as a demotion, and was ashamed of it. His visitor carefully explained to him the opportunity offered in an ungraded class for handwork, in which he was interested: he liked to work with wood, indeed any sort of work that required planning and accuracy. She also took the opportunity to tell him that when he improved in reading and spelling he would be returned to a regular grade. He was somewhat encouraged.

During the remainder of the school year efforts were continued to reconcile Joseph both to the ungraded class and to the idea of remaining in the foster home. The two were more or less intimately related, since the boy felt he would be disgraced if he returned to his old neighborhood while he was in the ungraded class. *He became more interested in the handwork offered, as time went on, and also put more effort into trying to master his reading and writing in the hope of winning a re-transfer and a return to his home.* Those interested in guiding him realized that it would be a long time before he could reach these goals, but did their utmost both to encourage him toward them and to help him accept his present situation. Mrs. Tolman helped him a great deal with his work, taking care not to press him too hard. He came to her about many things that puzzled him and confided in her a good deal. *Hours of her time were consumed in this way, and often the boy wrought on her nerves, but her realization of his need and desire to help him enabled her to control her feelings.* Not only his school work but his behavior at school showed marked improvement.

As part of the general effort to render Joseph more con-

tented, his ardent desire to go home over the Easter holidays, that spring, was acceded to, though not without hesitation. By this time he had come to be great friends with Maurice, the foster brother nearest his age. If this boy, who was full of good spirits and good feeling, could accompany Joseph to his home, it was felt that the prospect for a peaceful visit would be vastly improved. Through an understanding reached with the two families this was arranged. Upon their return Maurice reported that during the two days nothing had been said to irritate Joseph, the visit had gone off smoothly and both boys had enjoyed themselves. Joseph had told his family, at great length, about the birthday party Mrs. Tolman had recently given for him. Because it was his first birthday party it had made a great impression upon him.

Little by little, during this spring, Joseph grew less quarrelsome and more friendly in his attitude toward other boys, even sometimes taking part in street games with the neighborhood crowd. As his interests thus approached the normal, he forgot his checkers. He even forgot, at times, to wash his hands and brush his clothes, and became almost normally untidy. Mrs. Tolman remarked that "it seemed he could only have limited interests, too many at a time tended to upset him." The agency's psychiatrist, who reexamined the boy in April and again in June, found him greatly improved both mentally and physically, and was impressed with what Mrs. Tolman had accomplished.

Early that summer Joseph went to camp, and on his return "radiated happiness and contentment," showing with satisfaction a box of leaves he had collected and a few articles which he had made in the arts and crafts class.

Late in the summer Mrs. Tolman was planning to go for a visit to a friend in the country who was married to a Gentle

and who ran their home on Gentile lines. She had not intended to take Joseph with her, because he would be likely to find the alien habits of the household displeasing. He insisted on going, however, so she took him along, thinking, "It will be a liberal education for him."

At the home of her friend he fitted in surprisingly well. He had a wonderful time outdoors, going fishing and swimming, and picking berries. When, with Mrs. Tolman's help, he wrote home about these good times, the reply he received was that he shouldn't go fishing, he shouldn't for God's sake go picking berries, he might get poisoned.

Mrs. Tolman summed up the change that had taken place in Joseph during the eight months he had been under her care in a paper written while she and Joseph were still in the country. She pictured him as no longer "the sullen faced boy with a pinched expression and averted look" who had come to her, but as "a smiling, pleasant-faced, eager fellow that meets you open-faced and friendly." "Only, at times," she added, "he gets quarrelsome and insists on having his own way regardless of whether he is in the right or not." "Joseph is still Joseph, and there is a lot of room for improvement yet."

With the return to town and to school, the last statement quoted above proved only too true.

An incident which occurred early that fall helps one to realize the sort of personality and mentality with which Mrs. Tolman had to deal in her foster son, now eleven and a half years old. Another boy in the ungraded class, said by the teachers to be quite a behavior problem, persuaded the usually serious and sedate Joseph to join him in pursuing a little girl on the street and robbing her of her pencil box. The two



then fell out over the division of the spoils, and as Joseph couldn't get the pencils he wanted he abandoned the entire box to the other fellow. When the foster mother questioned Joseph as to what had occurred, "he grinned and felt joyous about it. To him it was a great joke and a game of fun." She drew him out as to details and talked the whole affair over with him, succeeding finally in making him realize that what he and the other boy had done was cruel and not funny. Meanwhile the little girl's father had threatened to take the boys into Children's Court. Next morning Joseph wanted Mrs. Tolman to go to school with him and protect him. This she refused to do; she explained to him that he would have to face the consequences of his behavior, and advised that if he should see the little girl he apologize to her. Later, she did go to the school and adjust the matter, presumably by explaining Joseph's deficient understanding and her efforts to make him grasp the true import of the incident.

Again, this fall, the record states that the foster mother keeps in close touch with Joseph's parents. Mr. Zimmerman is "very cooperative"; he usually consults with Mrs. Tolman, when he visits, as to what he shall say to or promise Joseph, and is very appreciative of her efforts and of the interest she is taking in his son. In addition to visiting, he calls the boy up on the telephone once a week.

This is perhaps as good a place as any in which to mention certain peculiarities of this boy's mental make-up. The first psychologist who examined him under agency auspices, just after his eleventh birthday, found him lackadaisical, careless, and uninterested; he had just had this test, he said—referring doubtless to one given him in school. In vocabulary and language ability he was decidedly deficient, in comprehension and judgment fair, in rote memory and arithmetical reason-

ing average At the same time, in the peculiar ability to plan and execute which is tested by the Porteus mazes he showed himself exceptionally skilful, making a sixteen-year score, moreover, he worked with great care and took a lively interest in this new test This showing led the examiner to suspect that he had more ability than the Stanford Binet IQ disclosed His outstanding difficulties with reading, writing, and spelling were attributed by the agency's psychiatrist to "a sort of agaphic aphasia<sup>2</sup> of hysteric or psychoneurotic origin " Marked improvement along these lines had been noted at the end of the first school year

Thus Joseph's second year in the foster home would have opened with greatly improved prospects, had it not been that at about this time his family began to insist that he go to Hebrew school and prepare for his bar mitzvah<sup>3</sup> As soon as he took on the heavy additional work involved he began to lose ground in his public school work Then, of his own accord, he ceased going to Hebrew school, though he was heard to assure his father, in reply to a question over the telephone, that he was going Agency and foster mother agreed that he should not be forced to go His visitor had a long talk with him, in which he twice broke down and wept—once because he was sure he would never be able to get back into a regular grade and so win the privilege of going home, again because while he would like to meet the requirements of the bar mitzvah he was positive he wasn't going to be able to do it The visitor assured him that he didn't have to go to Hebrew school, that sometime later arrangements would be made for

<sup>2</sup> Aphasia—a weakening or loss of the faculty of language in any of its forms—reading, writing, speaking, or the appreciation of the written, printed, or spoken word— independent of disease of the vocal organs or of the mind."

<sup>3</sup> The reference is to a ceremony which celebrates the Jewish boy's arrival at "the age of religious duty and responsibility"

him to have private lessons in Hebrew, and advised that he devote himself to his public school work. He went home apparently much relieved, and reconciled to staying with the Tolmans. The visitor then undertook to make his father understand that he and the rest of the family must drop the issue of Hebrew school and cease bringing pressure to bear on Joseph, because the boy was unequal to carrying such a load of work. She succeeded, to a degree, for the time being at least. In the spring the record mentions that Joseph's father is giving him Hebrew lessons and that Mrs. Tolman is helping him with them, devoting a great deal of time to this work, but one gathers that little was demanded of the boy by these two instructors in comparison with the requirements of Hebrew school.

As a result of these various adjustments, Joseph became more cheerful and amiable. Whereas when most upset he would refuse to run an errand for Mrs. Tolman, he now of his own accord would ask if there was something he could do for her, like wiping the dishes at night.

As the Easter holidays approached, Joseph begged to be allowed to spend them at home, and for the first time was permitted to go, without Maurice, for one night. The sister who came to fetch him was interviewed by the visitor and urged to see that the folks at home should not talk too much to Joseph about school or his coming home, but that they rather encourage him to remain in the foster home until he learned to read and write better.

Whether the family acceded to the request made seems doubtful, for soon after this visit Joseph was again actively seeking permission to go home. Mrs. Tolman about this time came to the conclusion that while the boy had shown great improvement since he came to her, he had now ceased to

progress and was not likely to go much further. She asked that the psychiatrist see him again. This examiner was, however, emphatic in opposing a return home and in urging that Joseph remain with the Tolmans, and seems to have influenced the boy to accept this decision.

The foster mother's discouragement was probably in part a result of physical fatigue. Early in this second summer she asked that Joseph be cared for away from her home for an additional two weeks after his usual stay in camp, so that she might have a longer rest from him, and this was arranged. Late in the summer, she again talked of how difficult Joseph was to manage, how she had trouble with her neighbors because he kept hurting younger boys and girls; she was growing very tired of him and would like to give him up, though she realized that she was the only person who had ever been able to manage him. She felt that his parents were influencing him against her and undoing everything she did for him. Recently, for example, his father had forbidden him to go swimming with her, and she had been obliged to leave him at home when she took her family on outings to the beach.

Despite these difficulties and discouragements, the fall brought decidedly better reports from the ungraded class, where Joseph's teacher felt he was now making a great effort to master reading and writing and that his social attitude was much better. This report elated Joseph. His parents' renewed pressure for his return to Hebrew school was also met by arranging for private tutoring, and in the spring the boy was actually prepared for a simplified bar mitzvah ceremony. As a result his oppressive feeling of inferiority was greatly relieved and his self-respect heightened. He took up again old religious habits in which he had grown lax and adopted others suited to his new adult status. The foster family, who

were themselves liberals, had always been careful not to discourage him in his orthodox practices, but when he came back to them, after visits to his home, puzzled by things his parents had told him about religion, they, out of their greater fund of knowledge, were able to help him to broader and more understandable interpretations which proved satisfying to him.

Another satisfaction which this third year in the foster home brought Joseph was the ability to travel about the city alone. Heretofore his inability to read street signs and the like had made it necessary for someone, usually his foster brother Maurice, to go with him everywhere. When, in the spring, the Tolman family moved to a house at a greater distance from his school, and it was decided that he could assume responsibility for traveling there and back by streetcar, his pride in exercising this newly gained independence was immense, and he was full of tales of his journeyings.

With the satisfaction of feeling himself growing up and a bit on his own came, however, a new dissatisfaction. One day in May, Mrs. Tolman called at the office to discuss Joseph's change of attitude in the past few weeks. He seemed to be brooding over something which he would not discuss with

treated in the foster home like a much younger child and one of limited mentality. Maurice, who was very bright, was inclined to tease him, and Joseph, lacking a sense of humor, couldn't stand this. Once the foster mother, in scolding her son and forbidding him to tease Joseph, had remarked that she expected Maurice to use better judgment because he had more brains. Joseph took great exception to this and had difficulty in controlling his tears when he spoke of it. Other minor incidents which he related he interpreted as ridicule of his limitations. Apparently he felt that Mrs. Tolman's interest in him was waning, and for that reason had not felt free to take up these complaints with her. He wanted the visitor to talk to her about them. This the visitor promised to do.

When a few days later the two women had their talk, the foster mother was extremely pleased to learn that Joseph had unburdened himself of all these accumulated grievances. She admitted frankly that what he said was quite true; she had not realized that the boy had awakened to all the sensitive points, and understood now that the time had come when he must be treated with much more caution. Her son's teasing of Joseph had been all in good faith, she said, but like her he had not realized Joseph's sensitiveness. She would explain the matter to both her sons, making them understand that Joseph seriously objected to their teasing remarks and must be treated as a grown-up fellow and their equal mentally. She would also talk to Joseph and try to convince him that her interest in him had not lessened, and was equal to that she felt in her own boys.

These conversations took place as planned and a better understanding was reached between foster mother and boy. Evidently Joseph was satisfied, for no further complaints came from him. The summer passed uneventfully with the

usual period at camp, and in the fall he was glad to go back to school. The last recorded item in the record, at the time this reviewer studied it, was a letter written by the director of the agency at midyears, the following winter, to the superintendent of Joseph's school, expressing the great appreciation felt by the agency for the work done with the boy in the ungraded class. The letter says, in part: "His work in school has been stimulating to him not only at school but outside

*It has increased his ability to play and work better with other children and has lightened the load of an understanding foster mother."*

Mrs. Tolman's reputation as a foster mother rests almost wholly upon the work she did during the period under review with this one peculiarly difficult boy. Her keen understanding, resourcefulness, and patience are equally remarkable, and no less so her ability, resting upon her comradely relationship with her own two boys, to insure their cooperation in handling their foster brother.

Maurice, almost exactly Joseph's age, appears to have been her chief assistant. For two of the three years, he went with Joseph or took Joseph with him almost everywhere, supplying his foster brother's deficiencies as a reader and doing much to keep him contented and good humored. The visitor speaks of him as Joseph's "main pal." He was no saint, for one reads—almost with relief!—of a "fist fight" the two youngsters had in the spring of their second year together. In this fight Joseph bit Maurice on the cheek. The visitor's account of what happened next day seems worth quoting for the light it casts on relations between the two boys. "Maurice is a very bright, jolly boy and has a splendid sense of humor. He is a very fine influence for Joseph, and knows just how to

get along with him. Although Maurice was hurt in this fight more than Joseph . . . it was a good lesson for Joseph. The whole matter was gone into by the two boys, foster mother, and visitor. The result was quite good. It was felt that Joseph seemed to understand that it was not a manly act, that he should fight when necessary like a real boy and not use his teeth as animals do. Maurice in this conversation was most helpful and patient with Joseph."

It was, however, the foster mother who received such confidences as Joseph gave, about past troubles in his own home or current difficulties and perplexities, and who served as chief guide and interpreter of the customs and manners both of what was, to him, a strange foreign world, and of his parents' familiar world of traditional religious practices, which, in all their confusing and often clashing interplay, have perplexed better minds than Joseph's.

The reviewer, meditating on the Tolman family life as it is lit up by an occasional line in this record, finds the word "civilized" rising to the surface of her thought. What freedom from rampant egotism, what steady control of vagrant impulses and irritations, what courtesy and consideration must characterize the members of a family group which can accept a boy like Joseph and make him one of them, bearing with his queernesses day in and day out over a period of years! To be continually sacrificing an opportunity for reading on the altar of the checkerboard, or the chance to think one's own thoughts to a need for explanations in words of one syllable, to have to be forever guarding against misinterpretation by a dull, suspicious mind living in an utterly alien world of thought and feeling—these are severe tests, which only individuals of exceptional poise and ability to enter into



the lives of those less fortunate than themselves would be able to meet. If we had the recipe for building up such a family life, how many current problems of our semi-barbarous world might we not solve!

## *"Not a Mother"*

It was first of all to talk about Patty Kirk, whose record I had been reading at intervals over a period of many months, that I called to see Mrs. MacIntyre. Patty had been living with the MacIntyres for three years and was soon to return to her father's people in Vermont, whence she had come. In these three years changes had taken place and many experiences had come to foster mother and daughter which I wanted to understand as they could hardly be understood from the record alone. I wanted, too, to become acquainted with Mrs. MacIntyre as an individual, to gain some insight into the thinking and feeling which she put into her job of being a foster mother.

Small and plain, neutral in coloring, without any striking feature to make her stand out from a group of women such as one meets every day, this foster mother nevertheless gave an impression of character, of force, which made itself felt at once.

We began in the middle of things, with the impending experience of parting. How did Mrs. MacIntyre feel about it? How did Patty feel?

Mrs. MacIntyre spoke calmly, but the observer thought there was a slight quivering of her lips, quickly controlled. It would be hard to give the child up, but—"I am not a mother." The tone, the barely perceptible gesture of resignation, completed her meaning: What has to be must be endured. . . . Patty's feelings were mixed; the child dreaded leaving, yet there was a certain pleasurable excitement about looking forward to the trip, to new clothes, to seeing all the relatives. . . . It would be later that she would be really homesick, the foster mother thought.

first she had shown delight in her attractive little room, and in being the *only* child in the home. The foster parents made much of her, and she responded joyfully to their attentions. There was a mother dog with puppies which she enjoyed playing with, and Mrs. MacIntyre provided plenty of toys. Soon Patty began to ask the foster mother to let her help

from any of the social diseases. Patty's father, when he came to ask the agency to find a home for his daughter, had told a fragmentary, disconnected tale of a much-broken-up marital life. He seemed to wish to avoid talking about his wife, but intimated that she had neglected the child and had been unreliable in other ways. He is described in the record as a tall, powerfully built man with bloodshot eyes, whose breath carried a heavy odor of liquor. From this report one would infer that the agency workers were alive from the beginning to the probability that he was in some degree responsible for difficulties with his wife. However, he was traveling salesman for a well-established firm, and his employers wrote in reply to an inquiry that he was a competent worker who had been well recommended to them; his sister, visited in her home, was emphatically unwilling to keep Patty; and since the man was determined to bring his child to the city, it seemed to the agency to be its duty to protect her by every means in its power.

How much Patty needed protection did not appear for some months. Mr. Kirk on one of his early visits to the office was accompanied by a man of not very prepossessing appearance whom he introduced as Mr. Lombardo, an old friend. The Lombardos, he said, would like to take Patty out and give her a good time, occasionally, while he was away. Later he spoke with disapproval of the man, implying that he had learned something to Lombardo's discredit. Only once did an invitation come from Mr. Lombardo for Patty, and the privilege of taking the child out was then refused him. Her father, during those early months, seemed content to visit briefly in the foster home after each business trip, bringing gifts which delighted his small daughter.

Patty, meanwhile, was settling down happily. From the

first she had shown delight in her attractive little room, and in being the only child in the home. The foster parents made much of her, and she responded joyfully to their attentions. There was a mother dog with puppies which she enjoyed playing with, and Mrs MacIntyre provided plenty of toys. Soon Patty began to ask the foster mother to let her help about the house, her aunt would never let her do anything but run errands, she said. Once she begged so hard to be allowed to clean the kitchen floor that the foster mother finally yielded, just for that once. The child did a beautiful job, going into all the corners, and was warmly praised. She wanted to help with the cooking, too, and was permitted to do so. She made herself useful when Aunt Fan put up fruit, and specially marked the label of each jar she had to do with, and whenever one of these jars was opened for supper Uncle Don would declare that the peaches or strawberries that came out of it were the best ever. In all these ways the child showed her desire to be one of the family.

It happened that Mrs MacIntyre had a brother and small nieces and nephews in the city who were in the habit of coming frequently to her home. One of the little girls was near Patty's age, and when she came with her parents for an afternoon's visit Mrs MacIntyre took pains that Patty's sense of at homeness should not be disturbed by signs of an older intimacy. On the first occasion of the sort she drew Patty aside and asked if she'd like to have Ella stay overnight? and then, if she'd like to ask Ella's mother if she might stay? Patty was delighted. The little girls became very friendly and visited back and forth, and Ella often went on outings with the MacIntyres and Patty.

Patty had not been many months in the home when she one day surprised her foster mother by asking whether she

thought the agency would let them have another little girl to be a playmate for her, and whether Aunt Fan would think it too much care to have another child? Remembering how emphatically Patty had wanted to be the only child in the home, Mrs MacIntyre replied, "Why we might manage, but are you sure you want someone else here?" Patty, it appeared, was sure. Pressed a bit as to what had changed her feeling, she explained "Well, you treat me just the same as you do Ella who is your own brother's little girl and I am really no relation to you, so I think you would think just as much of me as you would of any other little girl that came here."

All this was duly explained to Miss Barlow, Patty's visitor, when next she called and the possibility of placing another child in the home was considered. No little girl of suitable age and type was however available, and besides, there was the question whether, when it came to the practical issue, Patty would be as ready to share her home as she thought she would.

Early in the fall a severe cut in Mr MacIntyre's salary made the family feel that they must move to a cheaper apartment and get along with one less room. They found an apartment with a large kitchen which they fixed up with some of the sitting room furniture and a screen around the kitchen fixtures so that Patty might still have a bedroom to herself. The visitor expressed appreciation of the sacrifice they had made for the child—for in the previous house there had been a large pleasant sitting-room with many plants in the windows, of which Mrs MacIntyre had been proud. The foster mother replied, "I do not consider it a sacrifice to do anything for Patty. She has so many fine qualities—and so long as we do not know what her father may do in the future, we

must do the best we can now to make her happy, give her assurance and poise, so that she will be able to meet anything that comes up in the future."

Meanwhile, the long summer vacation over, Patty was going to school and liking her teacher and bringing home good marks. She said Uncle Don was the greatest help with her home work. She seemed, as her visitor on one occasion reported, "secure and happy, without a care in the world." Except when her thoughts strayed to her mother, and she fell to wondering why her father wouldn't talk about mother or let her write to her; then sometimes she would sit staring into space with a troubled look. She looked troubled, too, when her father would leave after a very short visit, saying that he had a "date" with a "lady."

Then, toward the spring, Mr. Kirk arranged to take Patty one Saturday for an outing.

When the child returned she looked far from happy. She and her father had been, it appeared, at Lombardo's room; there had been a lot of drinking; Netta, Lombardo's girl, had become intoxicated, and Patty had been forced by her father *to drink some queer-tasting stuff that made her sick*. Her father had talked of taking her away from the MacIntyres' and she had protested against being moved. She was disgusted and fearful. Her account sounded as though Lombardo and the girl ran a speakeasy, and a visit paid by one of the agency's representatives to their address proved that such was the case.

A month or so later, before there had been time for the anxiety caused by this unsavory episode to subside, Mr. Kirk appeared one evening about nine at the foster home, evidently much the worse for liquor and with a bottle of whisky in his pocket. He demanded that Patty be got ready forthwith; he was going to remove her and place her with the

Lombardos. The MacIntyres, of course, explained that they were responsible to the agency for the child's safety and couldn't let her go without its consent. Mr. Kirk took one long drink after another and became more and more argumentative and abusive. Mr. MacIntyre stepped out to look for a policeman, whereupon the father seized his terrified little daughter by the arm and made for the door. The foster mother tried to intercept him, he struck her a blow in the face that caused her to fall, and made off with the child. Returning in time to see the departing guest on the run, Mr. MacIntyre pursued him and, as luck would have it, encountered a policeman who helped him rescue the child and was ready to arrest the man. This, however, Mr. MacIntyre didn't want; knowing as yet nothing of the blow dealt his wife, and realizing that if Kirk were put in jail he would probably lose his job, he persuaded the policeman to help bundle the drunken man into a taxi and instructed the driver to deliver him at his lodgings. He and Patty then went home to find a badly battered foster mother recovering from her fall.

The indignation of the adults, the terror of the little girl who went through this experience, may be imagined. Agency and foster parents in consultation decided on moving the foster home to a new neighborhood, and this was accomplished before Mr. Kirk returned from his next trip. As soon as he did so he was summoned to court on complaint of the agency, which asked that custody of his child be taken from him. This was not done, for to deprive the father of control of his child would, it appeared, involve returning her to the state where she had legal residence; and that would mean going again to strangers, or to the home of relatives who did not want her. The man was, however, sufficiently impressed with the



agency's authority so that he accepted the restrictions under which he was to be permitted, from this point on, to see his daughter. The whereabouts of the new home was kept from him.

Not long after the court hearing Mr. Kirk disappeared, and for months was not heard from. His payments for board, always irregular, ceased entirely. The agency assumed full financial responsibility for the child. Patty, though puzzled and worried by her father's disappearance, undoubtedly felt relief as the threat of his impending presence diminished, and life in the foster home settled once more into its peaceful routine.

During this second year the question of placing another child with the MacIntyres came up again, but from quite a different angle. Patty, well established in her home and school and with plenty of playmates, no longer begged for a little girl to keep her company. It was the foster mother who began to be troubled by the child's changing manner toward other children, especially toward the young nieces and nephews who visited in the home: she showed increasing selfishness, a tendency to overemphasize her exclusive rights, to cry "hands off!" when sharing her possessions was in question. The father of these little visitors had been long out of work and was being assisted by the MacIntyres, so that the youngsters were a good deal deprived; and Patty's superior attitude toward them grew increasingly displeasing to the foster mother. Herself one of a large family of children, Mrs. MacIntyre saw the solution to this new difficulty in providing a small sister or brother to share with Patty the attentions which had been too exclusively focused upon her. She broached the subject to her husband first. He said, "Your

judgment is good, but can you find another child like Patty?" She replied that it didn't matter—any child, boy or girl, of any age, would bring the essential need of sharing.

The agency was alive to the need and glad to place another child in this excellent home. As it happened, the only child for whom, at the moment, it was seeking a place was a baby girl of five months who was to be offered for adoption as soon as she had been trained into good habits. Mrs. MacIntyre had been a nurse before her marriage and was in every way admirably equipped to do this job of training.

For some time after little Nora came (Mrs. MacIntyre told me) Patty was "uneasy", the foster mother's attention was of course much taken up with the newcomer, and the little girl felt her loss of central position in the household. Gradually, however, as she sat by and watched while the baby was bathed and dressed and fed, she grew interested and wanted to be allowed to help. She was permitted to hold Nora, then, while Mrs. MacIntyre was close at hand, to hold the nursing bottle. She asked to be allowed to wash out the diapers, but was told no, this was a job requiring great care and many rinsings. Step by step she learned to do all sorts of things for the baby—could change her as skilfully as Mrs. MacIntyre herself could, and in the process grew fond of the little thing, and ceased to feel her a usurper.

The training period, for both children, lasted nine months. Nora, at fourteen months, was to go to adopting parents.

Of what her care of the baby had meant to her personally, of what giving the child up meant, Mrs. MacIntyre found it difficult to speak. "I *steeled* myself from the beginning," she said. The night before the transfer was to be made Nora was in her pen in the sitting room, pulling herself up and taking

a few staggering steps around the rail before she collapsed again Mrs MacIntyre said to her husband, "If only she would walk off by herself once, before she goes!" A few minutes later, coming from the kitchen, the foster mother was just in time to see little Nora, one of Patty's old dolls clutched to her bosom, turn from the rail and walk right across the pen! "My husband said, 'You have your wish'!"

Next morning, Mrs MacIntyre met Miss Barlow at the train The visitor had said, a few days before, "You are going to be good, aren't you?" The foster mother had answered, "Yes, I'll do my crying at home" Now she put the baby in Miss Barlow's arms and went, without a word

Her husband, watching her struggle for composure during the days that followed, urged her to ask for another baby to distract her attention After a little, she did so The agency was seeking, just then, an English-speaking home for a child of American parentage who had been living in one where Swedish was spoken Frederick was eighteen months old, he had lost his mother at two weeks and was visited by a father who was wrapped up in him Mrs MacIntyre agreed to take the child

But on the following Sunday morning, a few days before the transfer was to be made, little Frederick's father had presented himself, wanting to see the home to which his son was going

Mrs MacIntyre was surprised foster mothers who work for an agency have of course been thoroughly investigated, and parents who come to the agency usually do so because they would rather trust the judgment of its experienced workers than their own But she let the man in He showed her a diet list which he wished her to follow in feeding Frederick She explained that she would of course receive a diet

list from the agency's physician. He went, then, into other routines which he wanted her to follow, and emphasized one rule which was invariably to be observed every night, on going to bed, Frederick was to kiss his mother's picture, and Mrs MacIntyre was not to permit him to call her mother—the first time he did so, she was to punish him. "I won't have my child call you mother."

Mrs MacIntyre's astonishment may have shown in her face, though she acquiesced, merely saying that she would perhaps not find it necessary to punish the child. Frederick's father turned on her, and demanded,

"Why do you *crave* the love of other people's children?"

She answered,

"I don't 'crave' it. It comes."

It had been a moment of acute tension, so much was evident when, more than a year later, Mrs MacIntyre repeated to me the man's challenge and her reply. That evening she had said to her husband, "I cannot deal with that father. I think it is best that I shouldn't take Frederick after all." Her husband replied, "Your judgment is good." So next day she called up the agency and told what had occurred, and how she felt.

Not long afterwards an attractive but difficult little girl of seven had to be moved again, neither of the foster mothers who had cared for her had been able to endure her long. Mrs MacIntyre received her gladly and a few days later called up the agency to thank them for having given her such a lovely child. In the year that has passed since, she has not changed her mind. Isabel is an extremely lively youngster who gets into plenty of mischief and annoys Patty by mussing

up her things and leaving everything in disorder, but she is lovable and has made her own place with both foster parents.

During this third year of Patty's sojourn with the MacIntyres, the little girl for the first time has presented certain problems of behavior which the agency workers see as expressions of jealousy for an attractive junior. On one or two occasions she has "taken" things; once she and Isabel both helped themselves to small objects at the five-and-ten. This phase was not of long duration, yielding to commonsense methods. A more unusual series of events was especially inquired about by the writer, and Mrs. MacIntyre's account of them, given as nearly as possible in her own words, follows.

It all began with Patty's falling and suffering a slight concussion. For this she was taken to the General Hospital and kept there some ten days, having as she grew better a thoroughly delightful time.

About a week after her return home she complained one Saturday morning of a severe pain in her right side. Mrs. MacIntyre took her temperature and found it a little above normal. She called up the doctor, who said the child might have appendicitis and advised bed and an ice pack. The pain persisting, it was decided to send her to the General Hospital for observation.

Patty spent several days there, being subjected to various tests. Nothing at all was found to be wrong with her, and she was sent home.

A few days passed, and Patty again complained of the pain—it was very bad, she said; and again she was found to have a slightly elevated temperature. Once more she was sent to the hospital. The intern who had known her before, finding her unexpectedly, as he made his rounds, exclaimed, "What,

you here again? You must like it here!" Patty replied, "I do."

This time Miss Barlow called at the hospital and had a talk with the child. Patty told her that she didn't want to go back to the MacIntyre home while Isabel was there; she wished Isabel would go away. The visitor replied that she was sorry, but Isabel was going to stay.

In a few days Patty was home again; again nothing had been found wrong with her. But now, three days later, something began to be wrong: a severe sore throat, then a rash—and once more, for the fourth time within a month, the little girl was off to a hospital—this time the contagious disease hospital, and with a bona fide diagnosis of scarlet fever!

Her case was a severe one, but even so she enjoyed the hospital experience. She did say, however, upon her return, that she felt having scarlet fever had been a judgment on her for making too much of the pains, the other times. Since then nothing more has been heard about any such pains. She and her foster mother were exceedingly glad to be together again.

Patty's jealousy of Isabel has been frankly expressed on other occasions than the one above mentioned. Isabel, the foster mother says, is the kind of child who comes home after her day at school, drops her things anywhere, climbs up on Mr. MacIntyre's knee, and proceeds to tell him everything that has happened to her, good and bad, during the day. The first time this happened, Patty, standing by, remarked, "That used to be *my* place before you came, Isabel." Mr. MacIntyre said, "There's room for two." So Patty came and sat on the other knee, and from then on this was the accepted arrangement. She never went off by herself and sulked, or had tantrums, the foster mother said.

Gradually, as the two children have become better ac-

quainted, they have grown fond of each other. They have their "outs," of course, and Patty often becomes exasperated because Isabel, who is so untidy, isn't considered big enough to be entrusted with cleaning and setting things to rights in their room. (This was at first; the family has since moved, each child has a room to herself and there is a pleasant sitting-room.) She, Patty, has developed a sense of order, and keeps her own things beautifully neat, and every Saturday morning she cleans her room. She is proud of her ability to do this, but it *is* annoying to have Isabel go out to play while she is thus engaged. The foster mother suspects that Patty's severe pains on Saturday morning were somehow connected with the prospect of that weekly cleaning.

Some months ago Mr. Kirk returned to the city and got himself another traveling job. He professed complete reformation—had cut out his disreputable friends absolutely, and appeared to be in much better shape. He was not permitted to visit the foster home, but on one occasion, his time in town being especially brief, the foster mother took Patty down to have supper with him. Usually he visited with the child in the office, or at the home of Miss Barlow. His behavior, time after time, was impeccable. Once he was permitted to take Patty to the movies and to see old friends of his and his sister's, who expressed themselves as delighted with the child's appearance and manners. After this visit, Patty spent the night at the visitor's home.

Then came a second request: the old friends wanted to see Patty again. This time Miss Barlow was not going to be at home, so it was arranged that Mr. Kirk should put Patty on the train at nine o'clock and Mrs. MacIntyre should meet her at the station.

Patty did not arrive as expected. After a long wait, Mrs. MacIntyre arranged with the station master that if the child should put in an appearance he would hold her and telephone the foster home. Hardly had the foster mother reached home when the telephone rang. Mr. Kirk was on the wire: they had just come out from the movies, he said, and it was so late that their friends wanted to keep Patty overnight. Mrs. MacIntyre protested, but in vain.

Next morning (Monday) Patty came home and immediately went off to school. At noon the foster mother asked her what movie she had seen the night before. The child replied that she didn't remember. Impossible, thought Mrs. MacIntyre, but said no more. That afternoon, going through the children's things for soiled handkerchiefs, she found in Patty's pocketbook a card bearing Lombardo's address.

That evening she said to Patty, "You were at Lombardo's last night." Patty said "Yes." "And where did you sleep?" "On a cot." Further questioning revealed that Lombardo and Netta had occupied a bed in the same room, Patty's father and another girl a third bed. There had been no visit to a movie, but an evening devoted to drinking. The foster mother said nothing more to the child, but reported the facts to the agency.

Clearly, Mr. Kirk should not be trusted with his daughter again. The agency waited for his next move. But no word came from him. Weeks passed, and still no word. Then at last came a letter in his handwriting from the old home town: he had gone back and had got himself a job; he wanted Patty to come home to live with his sister. A second letter confirmed the first: the job was permanent, the request for the child's return renewed. He is Patty's father with all his legal rights to control his daughter's life intact. When school



closes, Miss Barlow is to take the child back to her aunt—a highly respectable if rather cold-natured woman, who presumably knows her brother. Whether she will be able to protect her niece from all the hazards which being the child of such a father may entail remains to be seen.

During these last weeks in the foster home Patty speaks often of the future and what it may hold. Once she said, "If they don't treat me right I'll come back to you; I'll find a way somehow." Mrs. MacIntyre replied, "Oh no, that wouldn't do. That would be running away." But when the talk turned to the more distant future, to Patty's growing up and finishing school and getting a job, the foster mother did permit herself to say that if ever Patty should decide to come to the city to work, she might come to live with them—their home would always be open to her. Patty seemed to find great comfort in the thought: it would be so nice to have a home to come to, she said, and not to have to hunt for a boarding house or a furnished room.

Looking not so far into the future, the present writer asked Mrs. MacIntyre what she thought would happen when Isabel was left alone in the home? Would she begin to show the traits Patty had shown, after a year and a half as only child?

Instantly Mrs. MacIntyre replied: "I shall not keep her unless I can have another child as well." So strong is her feeling that no one child should grow up in a home alone. Yet in the agency office the writer had been told that the MacIntyres were so devoted to Isabel that it was probable they would end by adopting her, and this affection there was no reason to doubt.

Throughout the interview drawn upon for the foregoing narrative, fragments from the record wherein were set down certain details of Mrs. MacIntyre's own life kept drifting

through the interviewer's mind a big family—a devoted family—strict parents, many brothers and sisters, now widely scattered, keeping in touch with one another always And, far back in the foster mother's little girlhood, a story about her running away to escape household drudgery, the care of a seemingly endless succession of babies Finally the question formed itself "Mrs MacIntyre, do you see any connection between what you are doing as a foster mother and your own early life? You were one of a large family of children, I believe?"

The foster mother looked surprised, then thoughtful "Yes," she said, "I was the middle child in a family of nine We were—well, not poor exactly—but we had to be careful I did not enjoy taking care of my younger brothers because I *had* to do it There was a big basket of mending, always, that had to be done before I could go out to play But"—her voice, her whole manner changed, dropping to a deeper level of feeling, taking on a new intensity—"I *love children* I shall never live without them again I cannot tell you what it means to me at night—to listen to their breathing (You know Mr MacIntyre has been working nights for fourteen years ) And to have their companionship, to have them go places with me—to the movies, to the shore I cannot tell you what it means to me to take a baby in my arms " She broke off abruptly

Riding back to town from the sparsely settled district on the outskirts where the MacIntyres live, the interviewer felt, rather than heard, that deep note of feeling vibrating through her mind Fragments of speech kept coming back, too "I am not a mother " "I *stepped* myself from the beginning "

"I'll do my crying at home " "I do not consider it a sacrifice " And, more often than any other words

spoken during the interview, that bit of dialogue with little Frederick's father:

"Why do you *crave* the love of other people's children?"

"I don't 'crave' it. It comes."

## *A Last Word*

IN a forth coming book by a psychiatrist<sup>1</sup> occurs the following passage

Insecurity is something which defies "cure" in the ordinary medical sense of the word. It arises out of situations that are beyond logical control and is combated through all of those mental processes which we subsume under the term "faith." This being the case, psychiatry and social work could have little to do with the matter as these two disciplines have been interested only in what *can* be done for patients. We must frankly face the things which we *can't* do.

Coming upon this passage after completion of the present volume about children in foster homes, the writer was forcibly struck. For in the field of child placing, agency workers rely not alone upon their own skills (supplemented at times by those of the other professions) but to a great degree upon the services of the group of closely allied workers whom they have selected and inducted into the role of foster parents. They realize (these agency workers) that the child who is rendered profoundly insecure by the death, desertion, or rejection of his parents needs not only physical care but something more—something which no professional person, however skilled, can supply. Is not the most vital service which a true foster parent can perform for such a child to "combat" this profound insecurity of his "through all of those mental processes which we subsume under the term 'faith'?" Is not this the most essential element in the contribution made by the foster mother to each child whose story has here been told?

<sup>1</sup> James S. Plant, M.D., Director Essex County Juvenile Clinic, Newark, N.J. *Personality and the Cultural Pattern* to be published by the Commonwealth Fund in the near future.

What precisely he means by "faith" in this connection, Dr. Plant does not tell us. Thinking of the foster child, we feel certain that the faith he needs to help him face the world must include a sustaining trust in human nature growing out of experience of love and kindness, of honesty and dependability. Whether in a free home or in a boarding home, the process of fostering this trust is the same. The qualities of the foster parents as individuals, the quality of relationships within their home, their attitudes not only toward the foster child, but toward neighbors and other outsiders, must be relied upon to provide the indispensable conditions for the growth in him of such a healing faith.

It is true that any child in whom trustfulness has been bred by his environment is likely, later, to meet with betrayal of faith in any of its myriad forms. Nevertheless, experienced parents will probably agree with students of psychology that every child needs to be equipped for later struggle and disappointment with the sort of confidence which grows normally out of the soil of a happy home. Individuals who have worked their way up to wise and beneficent adulthood out of conditions destructive of such faith are of course to be found. But no one who can control the environment of his own child would deliberately subject him to conditions likely to destroy his faith in human nature; and those who are genuinely concerned for homeless children will continue to seek for them a home setting which will preserve or restore such faith.